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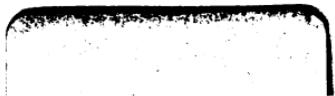
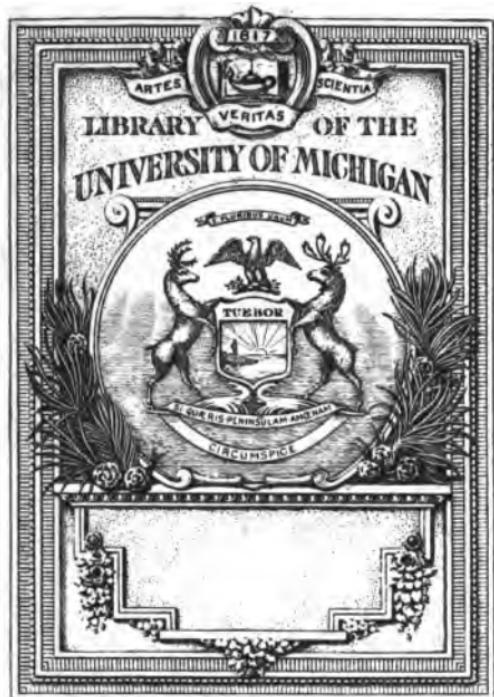
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HISTORIC ENGLISH

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JAMES C. FERNALD



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# HISTORIC ENGLISH

*Champlin*  
BY  
**JAMES C. FERNALD, L.H.D.**

AUTHOR OF "EXPRESSIVE ENGLISH"; "ENGLISH SYNONYMS, ANTONYMS AND PREPOSITIONS"; "A WORKING GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE," ETC. EDITOR OF "FUNK & WAGNALLS DESK STANDARD DICTIONARY"; "COMPREHENSIVE STANDARD DICTIONARY"; "CONCISE STANDARD DICTIONARY," ETC.



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## FOREWORD

"THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE is a power because it is a life—the life of a great people expressed in words that live. At each stage the language has enshrined, incarnated, the thought and deeds of its present to be the motive-power, the inspiration of the ages to come. . . . The higher possibilities of language come through admiration, honor, and love for the English language as a great, beneficent, and living power. . . . To put ourselves back in time, to let ourselves go, and mentally reproduce the conditions and thoughts of the men of other days, develops the imagination, broadens the range of thought, and makes the very words of our language rich with the content of centuries."

These sentences, quoted from the author's last previous book, are the key to the present work.

"Some time before I die," he had told his associates, "I am going to write a book which will show that *the English language is what it is because of the way it came into being*. No one can fully grasp the meaning, and completely master the use, of the English language without knowing the history of English as a language."

His conception of it was always that it originated as a language of the common people, which grew and developed as their thought and life and power

developed. It never lost its basic simplicity of structure and directness of statement, but from courts and schools, from travelers and traders, from friends and foes, it took to itself all that it needed to make it express the fullest range of thought of the entire people.

In his "Working Grammar of the English Language" the author states: "Its lack of intricate and complicated forms is . . . . welcomed as an acquisition and an attainment, wrought out by the conflicts of centuries, with the result that the English language has achieved a marvelous simplicity, such as no other language ever attained, and has made that simplicity compatible with exactness, force, and beauty."

More than ten years before his death, the author began this book. He did not hasten its publication; it was to be a more personal thing than any of the other twenty-five works that bear his name, and he wanted constantly to enrich and perfect it. He let "Historic English" benefit by all the ideas created in the most mature, yet active, years of his literary life.

By heredity and by environment, by early training and by his entire life's work, James Champlin Fernald was well fitted to write the vital "history of English as a language."

A descendant of Dr. Renald Fernald, who came from England to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1630, and a son of Judge Henry B. Fernald, he was

born in Portland, Maine, in 1838. He grew up in an environment where pride in the history of the English-speaking race combined with uncompromising accuracy in the use of the language itself. From his early years the study of English fascinated him. At Harvard he did notable work in English, among other honors winning the Bowdoin Prize in English Composition.

Determining on the ministry, he spent three post-graduate years in Newton Theological Seminary, graduating at the age of twenty-five. His experiences in the service of the Massachusetts Relief Association on the battlefields of the Civil War quickened his maturity and strengthened his power in the ministry, to which a quarter of a century was devoted.

Great as was the power of his spoken word during this period, the power of his written word proved greater. Fighting the liquor traffic from the pulpit, he also fought it with the pen, and his writings were reprinted throughout the entire nation.

Dr. Isaac K. Funk was quick to recognize his power, and prevailed upon him to come to New York, to assist in editing the *Voice* and the *Homiletic Review*, and to write his "Economics of Prohibition," whose arguments became the accepted standards of the movement which has finally resulted in prohibition.

When the staff of experts was organized to prepare the Standard Dictionary, Doctor Funk chose

## FOREWORD

Doctor Fernald for the difficult post of editor of the Department of Synonyms, Antonyms and Prepositions. The success of this work led to nearly thirty years of literary activity, with every year adding to his international recognition as an authority on the English language.

A series of abridgments of the Standard Dictionary; authoritative works on English and rhetoric; and a number of notable books outside of these two fields—compose that part of the achievements of Doctor Fernald's lifetime which are handed along on the printed page. A glance at the list of his works elsewhere in this volume will indicate their scope.

With this book and its companion volume, "Effective English," the series is ended: the pen has fallen, and the author's hand, busy with these chapters to the very last, is laid to rest.

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I

**NATIVE ENGLISH**



# I

## NATIVE ENGLISH

It becomes us to know something of that sturdy race who could reach down through the centuries and become the linguistic ancestors of the mighty English-speaking peoples of the modern world.

On the frontier of the old Roman Empire, as it sank to decay, glimpses appear of some Germanic tribes too resolute to bow the knee to Cæsar, but too undisciplined to make head against imperial despotism, retiring before the Roman arms until they found refuge along the bleak shores of the North Sea from the Rhine to the Elbe, including the peninsula of Jutland, the modern Denmark. They were the elect of the oppressed,—those who had held out because too inflexible to surrender and too fierce to be conquered, too vigorous to sink under all the hardships of sea and land. Their very existence was by fulfilment of the law of the “survival of the fittest.” As the land behind was closed to them, they took to the ocean and made it their home and their highway. Every man’s hand being against them, they set their rude, rough hands against every man, and became the most daring and ferocious of pirates. Their long, black, flat-bottomed galleys, capable of being run into any river or inlet, drawn up on any beach and pushed off at will by sturdy arms, speed-

ing across the sea, with their broad sails supplemented by ranks of strong oarsmen,—not the chained galley-slaves of Rome, but every man a freeman and a warrior,—would suddenly appear off any defenseless coast; the crew, dropping the oars for sword and spear, would become an invading host of fighting men, sweep together what plunder could be swiftly gathered, and disappear across the waters before any organized force could be mustered to meet them.\* A Roman poet, Geoffrey of Malaterra (*Gaufridus à Malaterra*), said of them: "They are foes fierce beyond any other foes, and cunning as they are fierce; the sea is their school of war, and the storm their friend; they are the sea-wolves that prey upon the pillage of the world." The love of the sea and the instinct of battle were in all their veins. When Drake, centuries later, burst into the harbor of Cadiz, destroyed at its moorings the fleet that was gathering to subjugate England, and then sailed triumphantly away, he was but repeating on a larger scale a common exploit of his Anglo-Saxon sires.

\* Chance has preserved for us in a Sleswick peat-bog one of the war-boats of these early pirates. The boat is flat-bottomed, seventy feet long and eight or nine feet wide, its sides of oak boards fastened with bark ropes and iron bolts. Fifty oars drove it over the waves with a freight of warriors whose arms, axes, swords, lances, and knives were found heaped together in its hold. Like the galleys of the Middle Ages such boats could only creep cautiously along from harbor to harbor in rough weather, but in smooth water their swiftness fitted them admirably for the piracy by which the men of these tribes were already making themselves dreaded. Its flat bottom enabled them to beach the vessel on any fitting coast; and a step on shore at once transformed the boatmen into a war-band. From the first the daring of the English race broke out in the secrecy and suddenness of the pirates' swoop, in the fierceness of their onset, in the careless glee with which they seized either sword or oar.

—GREEN, "*History of the English People*," vol. I, ch. 1, p. 30.

Rome, beginning with the invasion of Julius Cæsar, in 55-54 B. C., had conquered the southern half of the then savage island of Britain, stretched across it her imperial highways, the wonderful Roman roads, and given the people nearly three centuries of advancing civilization. Cities, towns, and churches had risen, and wealthy Romans had built there the elegant villas whose mosaics, artistic pottery, and floors of many-colored tile, are still found in the ancient ruins. Since the time of Constantine, Christianity had been the established and accepted religion of Britain, as of the Empire. But when, in 410 A. D., the Roman Empire, fighting for its life, withdrew its legions from Britain to defend the Eternal City itself against Alaric the Visigoth, the Britons were so beset by the Celtic tribes, then called Scots in Ireland and Picts in Scotland, that in desperation they summoned the pirates of the North Sea, whose terrible power they knew. These new allies, described as Jutes, from the peninsula of Jutland, included in the modern Denmark, landed in 449 A. D. on the island of Thanet, on the northeast corner of the modern county of Kent. They are said to have been under the command of two chieftains, Hengest or Hengist, and Horsa. The destructive critics, of course, regard these names as mythical. Fortunately this does not matter. The sea-rovers certainly came, and some leaders they must have had. They made short work of the Picts and Scots. But they learned the good-

ness of the land and the weakness of its defenders and their conquest of Britain began.

The real story of the invasion is wholly different from the popular conception of hordes of warlike invaders overrunning a country inhabited by a defenseless people. The Britons, once driven to the wall, fought with the fury of desperation. It was not until 475 A. D., twenty-six years after their landing at Thanet, that the capture of the last British fortress in Kent gave that little corner of Britain to the invaders. The conquest of this portion illustrates the pertinacity of attack and stubbornness of resistance which characterized the entire conquest of the island. Very striking, also, is the lack of unity and of national spirit among the Britons which could thus allow Kent to fight and fall alone. A similar want of cooperation among the Britons marked almost the entire Anglo-Saxon conquest.

But the invaders, though coming tribe by tribe, evidently descended upon selected portions of the coast. They showed their kindred and a certain racial unity by respecting one another's conquests. A new band would take a new strip of coast and conquer up to the boundary of what their predecessors had already mastered. It was not until more than one hundred years after the conquest began that the Jutes and West Saxons came into conflict among the hills of Surrey, but even then the West Saxons quickly drew away to pursue their con-

quests of the Britons to the north and west. Though the conquerors are later seen contending over the spoil, in the beginning they respected and supported one another's conquests, by which means their separate attacks had the effect of a concerted invasion.

From the Germanic shores between the Elbe and the Rhine came a people—perhaps portions of many kindred tribes—known to the Celtic inhabitants of the islands as "Saxons," and doubtless so called by themselves, since they perpetuated the title in the names of their kingdoms, as of Essex, Sussex, and Middlesex—names which still designate the corresponding counties of modern England. The Wessex of the West Saxons, for a time best known of all, has disappeared from the modern map. It was in 447, two years after the conquest of Kent by the Jutes, that Saxon invaders swarmed upon the southern shore of Britain. In the year 519, after three-quarters of a century, Cedric, whose kingdom of Wessex was to play so great part in all the early history of England, was crowned king of the West Saxons. But in the very next year the West Saxons suffered a serious defeat at Mount Badon, which effectually stopped their western advance. At this period Welsh legends place the exploits of the famed King Arthur, who may well have been a historic personage. Some leader certainly rallied his race and led them to the victory which checked for thirty-two years, the life-time of a generation, the

advance of "the heathen from the Northern Sea. Around the name of such a leader the minstre would soon weave thrilling tales of romance, and the "Knights of the Round Table" would form convenient setting for the names of any subordinate chieftains whom the bards might delight to honor.

Resuming their advance in the year 552—almost exactly a hundred years after the conquest of Britain began—the West Saxons at length met the league forces of the cities of Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath, whom they defeated in the great battle of Deorham, in 577, thus gaining command of the rich valley of the Severn, and greatly reducing the resisting power of the British by cutting their dominions in two at that river. From the English Channel to Essex and Gloucester on the north, and from Kent on the east to the border of Wales on the west, a great parallelogram of southern Britain had become practically a Saxon conquest.

So prominent, indeed, were the Saxons in the early conquest of Britain that their name was given by the native Celtic peoples to all the invaders:

"A common name was applied by the Britons to all the alien immigration; and, though each tribe had its own domestic designation, they were, and still are, called *Saxons* by the Celtic aborigines and their descendants."—MARSH, "*Lectures on the English Language*," 1st series, lect. ii, p. 34.

Thus the word is often used in Scott's poems and romances. Roderick Dhu exclaims:

"Ay, by my soul! While on yon plain  
The *Saxon* rears one shock of grain;  
While, of ten thousand herds, there strays  
But one along yon river's maze—  
The Gael, of plain and river heir,  
Shall, with strong hand, redeem his share."  
—SCOTT, "*Lady of the Lake*," canto v, stanza 7.

The word *Saxon* has literary use also to denote the Anglo-Saxon people or language as distinguished from the Norman,—a usage made familiar by the same author, as applied to "Cedric, the *Saxon*" and his race, in "*Ivanhoe*." The brevity of the term *Saxon* has led to its frequent use as a substitute for Anglo-Saxon, to distinguish the people and the language, as we read of "*Saxon words*," "*Saxon traits*," "*vigorous Saxon style*."

Why, then, was not Britain named *Saxondom*, *Saxony*, or *Saxonland*? Because another tribe, of whom we know least, did most. The Angles or Engles came probably from the southern portion of the peninsula of Jutland, where a small district still called *Angeln* may be a portion of the territory they once occupied. They are mentioned as a distinct people by Tacitus and Ptolemy. The historian Bede (673-735 A. D.), who was one of that people and spent his life among them, records that the whole population of the Angles or Engles left their homes for Britain, and that the land they had originally occupied remained in his own time a dreary waste. Such movements of an entire people were frequent about the breaking-up of the

Roman Empire, as strikingly exemplified in the vast migrations of the Goths, Huns, and Vandals. The complete removal of the Angles from their old homes would be the best explanation of the slight knowledge left us of their life and history on the European continent. They had no cities, palaces or temples, probably no buildings of brick or stone, no statues or pictures, libraries or monuments. Their weapons and utensils, their jewelry, and the few coins such a people would use in that age of barter, they would carry with them in their ships. Within a generation there would be no more trace of their former presence than the migrating swallow leaves in its summer home. They seem to have been somewhat late in entering England. In the block of territory projecting out almost as a peninsula into the North Sea, they established their kingdom of East Anglia, almost equally divided into the territories of *Northfolk* and *Southfolk*, the present counties of Norfolk and Suffolk in England. Wherever we turn in this ancient history we seem to touch the present.

As rivers and inlets were the natural gateways for the sea-rovers, a portion of the Engles entered the Firth of Forth, while another force entered the Humber in 519, one year before the Saxons met their disastrous defeat at Mount Badon. Thus, while the Saxons were checked for more than thirty years in the south, the Engles were at the very opening of their greater conquests in the north.

From the Humber they conquered northward across Yorkshire, where the important city of York had been the capital of the Roman dominion, and where Constantine the Great had been proclaimed emperor of Rome. Thus they laid the foundation of what became their great kingdom of Northumbria, of which the present English county of Northumberland is but a remnant. The later predominance of Northumbria in arts and arms was doubtless the cause of bestowing upon all the conquered portion of the island the name which Chaucer spells "Engl-lond," the Engles' land—England. Others of the Engles spread along the course of the Trent, until the westward and southward advance of the Engles met the territories of the Saxons, and all the eastern, the central, and most of the southern portion of Britain had become the joint possession of the two invading peoples, while the kinship of the Jutes in Kent seems to have been fully recognized. Though their country later became the foremost seat of English learning, the Engles seem at this period to have kept no records of their conquests.

Thirty-six years after the Saxons had cut the British dominions in two at the Severn, Ethelfrith of Northumbria divided them once again, in 613, by the capture of Chester, near the northern border of Wales, looking out upon the Irish Sea. This was more than a century and a half after the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain began. This marked the end of the national existence of the Britons. The

broken remnants of their territory were afterward conquered one by one.

The slowness of the Anglo-Saxon conquest was momentous fact. The stubborn resistance which they met maintained the racial solidarity of the invaders. Their only security was in the truth of kindred to kindred. Their only reinforcements were from their kindred beyond the sea. The long contest kept them warriors. They were not secure, even in the lands they had conquered, except by the power and terror of their sword. Every Engle and Saxon must be ever and always a warrior. They could depend upon no foreign alliances, no hireling soldiery, but always and only upon their own strong arms. What they had taken they must keep, as they had won it, by force of arms.

It seems beyond a doubt that all the invaders in the early years of the conquest waged against the Britons exterminating war. Every victory was a massacre. Their spirit was that of Joshua when he called upon the sun and the moon to stand still, that Israel might complete the slaughter of the fugitive Amorites. The historian Green thus describes the sequel of the first great battle of invaders and natives in Kent:

"The victory of Aylesford (455) did more than give East Kent to the English; it struck the key-note of the whole English conquest of Britain. The massacre which followed the battle indicated at once the merciless nature of the struggle which had begun. While the wealthier Kentish landowners fled in panic over the sea, the poorer

Britons took refuge in hill and forest until hunger drove them from their lurking-places to be cut down or enslaved by their conquerors. It was in vain that some sought shelter within the walls of their churches; for the rage of the English seems to have burnt fiercest against the clergy. The priests were slain at the altar, the churches fired, the peasants driven by the flames to fling themselves on a ring of pitiless steel."

—GREEN, "*Short History of the English People*," p. 11.

The invaders were utterly heathen. They doubtless looked upon the religion of the conquered as the worship of some local divinities that would fight against them, and they thought to break their power by destroying their shrines and their priesthood. Cities they knew not what to do with, and they hated them as possible strongholds of a returning enemy. Hence they desolated them with fire, leaving only crumbling walls and blackened ruins. When they captured Anderida, in 491, on the site of the modern Pevensey, their own chronicle tells us, "Aella and Cissa beset Anderida, and slew all that were therein, nor was there afterwards one Briton left." The British historian Gildas gives a thrilling account of the cruel destruction of British towns and the slaughter of the inhabitants by the "whelps of the barbarian lioness," and the hopeless overthrow, as he deemed it, of all culture and civilization. In the farthest northern sweep of the West Saxon invasion, in an ill-starred advance upon Chester in 584, the invaders sacked and burnt the Roman station at Uriconium or Viri-

conium, "the white town of the valley," leaving ranges of blackened ruins, sadly described by British poet as "without fire, without light, without song," and the stillness broken only by the eagle scream. After their great victory at Deorham, in 577, they destroyed Bath, which had been a famous watering-place under the Roman occupation. "The wild forest grew in the colonnades and the porches of the hot springs, over the Forum and the public buildings of the Romans." An English poet describes it two centuries afterwards in a pathetic fragment called "The Ruined Burg," said by Stopford Brooke to be "the only English poem which has any relation to the Conquest," and which he thus translates:

"Wondrous is this wall of stone; Weirds (Fates) have shattered it!  
Broken are the burg-steads, crumbled down the giants' work!  
Fallen are the roof-beams, ruined are the towers;  
All undone the door-pierced turrets; frozen dew is on their plaster.  
Shorn away and sunken down are the sheltering battlements,  
Under-eaten of Old Age! Earth is holding in her clutch  
These, the power-wielding workers; all forworn and all forlorn in death are they.  
Hard is the grip of the ground, while a hundred generations  
Move away . . . .  
All their battle-bulwarks bared to their foundations are;  
Crumbled is the castle keep."

Some modern historians, who are unwilling to admit that anything remarkable ever happened—

still less anything dramatic—insist that there could be no such thing as “the promiscuous slaughter of an entire people,” and that, hence, the mass of the Britons must have become slaves of the conquerors, and in process of time have become amalgamated with them. But we need not fancy that the “entire people” would calmly wait in their homes for the invaders to come and mow them down or enslave them. A few massacres like that of Anderida, with “not one Briton left,” would be enough: afterwards the population would flee far before the invaders’ advance. So we find that, after the battle of Aylesford, those Britons who could flee crossed the Channel to Armorica, in northern France, in such numbers that in the year 461 they had a church and bishop of their own there, and by the middle of the sixth century so many refugees had come that they changed the name of the country, and Armorica had become *Brittany*—the “Briton’s land.” There was doubtless a continual retreat toward Wales and Cornwall on the west, as the invaders advanced from the east. A retiring population rapidly dwindles. The flower of the young men who might found or maintain homes fall in battle against the invader, and “the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride” are rarely heard in the land. The old and the feeble, the women and the children, sink under the hardships of flight and exile. Sustenance fails, as agriculture is neglected or rendered impossible. In America we understand this process per-

fectly. There was no "wholesale slaughter" of the American Indians, but how many of them were left in the Atlantic States in 1776,—a century and a half after the landing of the Pilgrims? How many ever settled down as "slaves" among the white men? How much mingling was there of Indian blood with that of their conquerors? When Cooper, in 1826, two centuries after the coming of the white men, wrote "*The Last of the Mohicans*," the American Indian was already, on the east of the Alleghenies, a being of romance.

The testimony of language favors the ancient story of ruthless extermination of the Britons. But a few common nouns (according to some authorities ten or a dozen), such as *bannock*, *bard*, *basket*, *Druid*, *mattock*, can be traced direct to British sources. With these are to be placed a few proper names, as *Thames*, *Kent*, and *Chester*. The last of these is very interesting, for it is the British form of the Latin word *castra*, "a camp." The *camp* was the visible embodiment of the Roman military power, and among a barbarous people the camp of their conquerors easily became a proper name, just as on what was once the American frontier *Fort Sill*, *Fort Smith*, *Fort Wayne*, etc., became names of towns and at length of cities. This word became also a familiar termination of proper names in the well-known forms *-caster* and *-chester*, as in *Lancaster*, *Leicester*, and *Worcester*. Another Roman word, adopted by the Britons and taken over by

the conquerors, was *colonia*, "colony," used in the form *-coln*, as a termination of certain proper names, as *Lincoln*. Never, perhaps, within historic times, have the people of a land perished leaving so little trace of their presence in what was once their home. Their impression on the English language is far less than that of the American Indians, who have given us *Massachusetts*, *Kennebec*, *Mohawk*, *Minnehaha*, *Minnesota*, *Susquehanna*, *Wyoming*, and a host of other proper names, besides *tomahawk*, *wigwam*, *squaw*, *papoose*, *toboggan*, *tepee*, *moccasin*, *pemmican*, etc. As regards the history of the English language, we have to start afresh with the Germanic conquerors of Britain almost as if the island had never before been occupied by human beings.

The memory of some of their divinities is preserved in the names they have left us of the days of the week—*Tuesday*, the day of *Tiw*, the dark god, to meet whom was death; *Wednesday*, the day of *Woden*, their chief god, the god of war; *Thursday*, the day of *Thor*, god of thunder and storm; *Friday*, the day of *Frea*, *Frigga*, or *Frigu*, the goddess of peace and joy and fruitfulness. *Eastre* was the goddess of dawn or spring, in whose honor an April festival was celebrated, the name of which passed over to the Christian festival of Easter. Behind and beyond all these was *Wyrd*, the death-goddess, the personification of Fate or Destiny, "whose name lingered long in the *weird* of northern

superstition." The warrior went into dubious battle, the mariner embarked on the stormy sea with the calm utterance, "All must be as Wyrd wills." But this was no passive submission to the inevitable. They did not wait for Destiny to come and find them. They would reach out for mighty enterprises, go forth upon perilous expeditions, do all that skill and valor could do, try the last device, use the last ounce of strength, strike the last blow, and then—if all proved vain—accept defeat or death undismayed, as what Wyrd, governing every man's life, had ordained.

"Their whole religion was a grim nature-worship of seamen and warriors. To them all life was a warfare. In the sad, inclement north, amid pathless forests, bridgeless rivers, raging and treacherous seas, and inhospitable shores, man found himself forced to contend with nature as with a many-weaponed beast of prey. He must ever face and grapple with mighty hostile forces. The world was full of hostile men. All that he possessed, land, home, treasure, life itself, he must be ready at any moment to defend with his sword. Therefore the one thing needful, the everlasting duty, is to be brave, meet fate with a spirit as resolute, bring human conduct up to the loftiness of nature. Life in itself has no value, and its ideal termination is to fall gloriously in battle against the elements or human foes."

There is a quality in their heroism that differs from the modern ideal of courage—a joy in the

peril for its own sake, whether of ocean or of battle. They exultantly accumulate pictures of dread, the gray wolves and the ravens, and the "earn," the great eagle, hovering about the advancing host, eager to fatten on the flesh of the slain, perhaps upon their own. The more terrific the peril, the higher is the joy of the dauntless soul that can dare its utmost. But this courage was more than that of the mere adventurer or knight-errant. They had learned the solidarity of the community. The welfare of the whole tribe or clan was a sacred trust for every man it contained, and the grandest devotion was for the victor to conquer or the vanquished to fall in defense of his people. With this went the personal loyalty of the thegn to his chieftain, whom he must stand by against whatever odds to the death. The most glorious fate was to fall beside him. For desertion of chieftain or comrades in battle there was no atonement.

Amid all this warlike ferocity, woman was held in honor. She inherited property and bequeathed it. She associated with men at their feasts—the wife of the chieftain passing among the warriors to offer the flagon of mead or of beer—and was received with all respect. In the common life of peace, it is true, much hard drudgery fell to her lot, and there was lack of the delicacy and gentleness that came in with the age of chivalry; but protection was assured her as long as there was a man of her kindred to stand in her defense, and she enjoyed

that high consideration which the Roman historian Tacitus, at an earlier day, remarked as characteristic of the position of woman among the Germanic peoples. To these fierce seamen and warriors of the north home life was sacred and dear.

There were high feasting and hard drinking in the great halls, the long tables loaded with flesh of boar and deer and a profusion of other viands, and with great cups or bowls of ale or mead. Yet we are not to think of these feasts as mere gluttonous or drunken carousals. There must have been some degree of temperance, for the bards sang their lays of heroic deeds, and were listened to and applauded, and many of the songs that have been preserved are of high poetic merit. Often the harp was passed from hand to hand, each guest in turn singing his song. Especially the stranger was given an opportunity to ingratiate himself with his hosts by some song of his own. Then we must remember that these feasts were only in the intervals of long sea-voyages, or of tedious and toilsome marches, encampments, or battles, so that hardship was a constant check upon indulgence, not permitting it, like the continual revels of the aristocracy of Rome in her luxurious days, to undermine the stamina of the race.

They were barbarians rather than savages, and their rude barbaric life was pervaded by much that was beautiful and grand. Brooches, rings, amulets, neck-pendants, sword-belts, cloak-fasteners, often

of exquisite form, studded with rough gems and inlaid with enamel, bronze boar-crests on the helmets of the warriors, shields decorated with ornamental designs, show a high grade of industrial art. Kings and chiefs are spoken of as "bracelet-givers." The sword was fashioned with especial skill, as the warrior's supreme reliance; coats of "ring-mail," made of steel rings deftly interwoven, were common, and "rattled upon the warriors as they walked." The smith was held in high honor, and Weland, the celestial armorer, held a place among their gods. As for architecture, they had practically none worthy of the name, their few buildings of stone being of the rudest construction; for the most part the plain wooden building met all their desires and needs. Their pottery, too, was rude and inferior. Some knowledge of agriculture they evidently brought with them, and they speedily became proficient in the cultivation of the soil.

Each portion of Britain mastered by hard fighting became the country of the conquerors. They had not come merely to plunder, and then to sail away to their old bleak and barren lands. They had come as home-seekers, sword in hand. They did not desire to share the land with the Britons. They wanted it all, and they wanted it for a civilization of their own. That unbendable, non-compliant, infusible something which it is now common to call the "insularity" of Englishmen is a quality which their ancestors seem to have brought with them

across the North Sea. This appears with comic touch in the name they soon gave to the earlier inhabitants of the land. No sooner were they themselves established in possession than they regarded themselves as the real people, and they called the native Britons "*Welisc*," "foreigners"—whence the name still applied to the *Welsh* of our own day. The country the Britons still retained became "the foreigners' land"—North *Wales* and West *Wales*. Their conquest was more than an invasion; it was rather an armed migration. In place of the Roman city, which they destroyed, they set up the Germanic town, which they knew how to build, to inhabit, and to defend.

Once established in their conquests, the conquerors fought many a fierce battle with one another—not for dispossession but for supremacy, the "overlordship" of one king or kingdom over one or more of the others. Strangely enough, these tribal wars opened the way for Christianity. In their contests against one another, the Engles and the Saxons did not wage exterminating war such as they had carried on against the Britons. The captives, instead of being slain, were sold into slavery, and by this means English slaves appeared in many markets of Europe. Very thrilling is the story of how the white skin, fair hair, and blue eyes of some of these Anglian captives, exposed for sale in Rome, attracted the attention of a young deacon, who called them "not *Angles*, but *angels*," and who,

when he became pope, to be known in history as Gregory the Great, undertook to Christianize the people whose captives had so impressed him at an earlier day. Thrilling also the story how Augustine and his band of missionaries landed in 597 on the Isle of Thanet, where the original force of Jutes had landed in 449, almost a century and a half before; how Ethelbert, King of Kent, who had now obtained the overlordship of England, held his court in the open air, listened attentively to the stranger's discourse, and within a year accepted the Christian faith and was baptized, his adhesion securing that of the nobles and the leaders of the people, until gradually Christianity spread northward through his dominions. It was taken for granted that the religion of the realm should be determined by the king, and this principle long subsisted in English history. It is true that missionaries from Scotland and Ireland had already done much, and afterwards did much, to win Anglo-Saxons to the Christian faith; but the general acceptance of Christianity throughout the realm is to be traced to the mission of Augustine.

Christianity proved a marvelous gift. All theology apart, it opened to the Anglo-Saxon islanders the continent of Europe and all the centuries of the past. It gave them the thrilling narratives of the Old Testament and the sweet and tender story and maxims of the Gospels. It brought to them the eloquence of Cicero, and the poetry of Vergil,

and, through the Latin, all that the world then knew of Homer, Aristotle, and Plato, and of all the great poets and historians and sages of Greece. It brought unity of thought, and, in time, of organization. Across the frontiers of the warring kingdoms that divided England reached one thought and one religion that looked to one supreme God, to whom all men and all nations were alike responsible.

In place of the blind *Wyrd*, "Fate," it gave the Will of an almighty, all-wise, and merciful Father whose ordaining was indeed irresistible for every nation and every life, but was according to a divine plan and purpose of good to all true souls in this life and in the life beyond. Even by the penances of the church these rude barbarians were taught the consciousness of sin. Murder and robbery and other crimes were no longer mere disorders that could be atoned for by a pecuniary fine, but reached within the jurisdiction of the Great Dispenser, who held the evil-doer responsible beyond all human censure or penalty. Such result appears strikingly in the poems of the great Northumbrian poet, Cynewulf. In his youth a gay, roistering minstrel at the courts of the nobles, he came, as he himself thrillingly tells, under a "conviction of sin," and, after long oppression of conscience, to a sense of divine forgiveness and love, all of which is as thrillingly depicted as in any experience ever related in a Methodist camp-meeting.

Christianity brought an outlook beyond the

present life. Seamen or warriors would meet danger or death with the same steadfast courage as of old, but they no longer came to a blank cessation of being. Thus in the poem called "The Battle of Maldon," the hero, who has grandly led his host against the invading Vikings, after valiant exploits has his right arm disabled so that the sword falls to the ground, and never thinking of flight, he awaits sure death at the hands of his onrushing foes. Then he utters his last appeal to the divine power:

"To thee I offer thanks, O Ruler of the peoples,  
For all the delightfulness I've found upon the earth.  
Now, O Lord of mercy, utmost need have I  
Grace upon my spirit that thou grant me here;  
So my soul in safety may soar away to thee,  
Into thine own keeping, O thou prince of angels,  
Passing hence in peacefulness. Now I pray of thee  
That the harming fiends of hell may not hurt my soul."

Christianity brought to England two centuries of Latin learning. Whatever we may now think of the monastic life, in that day the monasteries were the sole homes and centers of learning. The monk alone, by virtue of his religious consecration, was exempt from the call to bear arms. He alone could have the quiet and peace that made study possible. The monks still held the primitive idea of physical labor joined with spiritual devotion. They drained marshes, reclaimed fens, and cultivated the fields around their monasteries. Then in many quiet

hours they gave themselves to the study of the Scriptures and of ancient literature, and to copying precious manuscripts of old. To Canterbury, where Augustine and his missionary companions had first made their home, came Theodore of Tarsus in Cilicia, the city once famed as the home of the apostle Paul; consecrated as archbishop in 668, he brought to England the knowledge and study of Greek eight centuries before the Revival of Learning in Europe, and made Canterbury the educational center of southern England. But the chief seats of learning were in the Engle-land. The Monastery of Whitby, on the cliffs overlooking the North Sea, was renowned. At Jarrow in Northumbria Benedict Biscop gathered a library, bringing books collected in repeated visits to Rome. There Baeda (673-735), "The Venerable Bede," led his long, peaceful life, having under his instruction six hundred students at a time, and dictating works of priceless value, among them the first historical work of the English people, his "Ecclesiastical History of England," written in Latin, and a translation of the Gospel of John into the Anglo-Saxon, or English, tongue. Greek, brought from Canterbury, was known and studied at Jarrow in his day. At York Alcuin became a master of scholarship and won such distinction as a teacher that he was invited to the court of Charlemagne in 792, to carry out the great emperor's scheme of establishing education in his dominions. Thus England, in that early day, be-

came a source of instruction to continental Europe. The two centuries that followed the coming of Christianity were full of progress and of hope.

Then burst upon England the storm of the Danish invasion. The North Sea opened its ports again. Pirate galleys came in swarms to the shores of England, as three centuries before they had come to the shores of Britain, now bringing hordes from Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, all indiscriminately called Danes. In 794, just after Alcuin had gone as instructor to the court of Charlemagne, a pirate band plundered the monastery of Jarrow, where Bede had spent his peaceful scholarly life, and soon the learning of Northumbria was swept away.

"To men of that day it must have seemed as though the world had gone back three hundred years. . . . There was the same wild panic as the black boats of the invaders struck inland along the river-reaches, or moored round the river isles, the same sights of horror, firing of homesteads, slaughter of men, women driven off to slavery or shame, children tossed on pikes or sold in the market-place, as when the English themselves had attacked Britain. Christian priests were again slain at the altar by Worshipers of Woden; letters, arts, religion, government disappeared before these Northmen, as before the Northmen of three centuries before."

—GREEN, "*Short History of the English People*," vol. I, bk. I, ch. 3.

The Anglo-Saxon pirates had become farmers, and farmers are defenseless. On their own ground their homes are scattered far from each other, and most of their property is perishable. Their cattle

may be slaughtered where they stand, their grain taken or carried away, their houses, barns, and ricks reduced to ashes by the torch. They can not resist an army of soldiery except by organization, and organization was the one thing the Anglo-Saxons lacked. They could fight and die bravely; they could endure with the famed constancy of their race; but no kingdom was yet ready to unite with another kingdom. Their contests for overlordship they could not lay aside, even in the presence of a foreign foe, and within each realm rivals for the throne were every moment ready to wage fierce warfare with one another. Hence, wherever invaders appeared, they soon gained the mastery, until all the once powerful kingdom of Northumbria, all of East Anglia, and all of Central England almost to London had become subject to the Northmen, the entire territory being known as the "Danelagh," or "Danelaw," because there the Danish law alone prevailed.

At length Alfred the Great (849-900) brought the element of organization which assured for the English people a future. King of Wessex and a man of eminent personal courage and warlike prowess combined with the power of organization and of holding masses of men together and moving them with masterful strategy for attack or defense, joined with a wonderful constancy and patient yet determined endurance, he set to work to save his own realm from subjection by the Northmen. He made Wessex the bulwark of England, first buying off the

invaders to secure a few years' respite; then, taken by surprise by their unexpected renewal of attack, and driven to a stronghold in the marshes of Athelney where "he greatly stood at bay," thence issuing forth and suddenly defeating the enemy in battle, until he drove them from Wessex. Finding that their incessant inroads would ultimately wear out even Saxon resistance, with statesmanlike enterprise he devised a navy of ships swifter and more powerful than those of the pirates, to guard the shores of England against reinforcement of the invaders. His was the thought that the poet Campbell long afterwards expressed:

"Britannia needs no bulwarks,  
    No towers strong and steep;  
Her fortress is the mountain wave,  
    Her home is on the deep."

Finally, as the best expedient to secure rest for the territory he had rescued, he made the Peace of Wedmore, leaving the Danes in possession of all the "Danelaw," while shutting them out of Wessex. With the soldiery he had trained in Wessex and the fleet that swept the sea, he held the Danes to the conquests they had already achieved, while he devoted himself to the task of restoring the defensive power of his realm, advancing its civilization, and building up again the learning that had been destroyed. This last was the hardest task of all: as he pathetically remarked, "When I began to reign, I can not remember one priest south of the

Thames who could render his service-book into English." But by precept and example he began the movement which later deepened and expanded into the rich product of English literature. His warlike fame made his scholarly devotion gleam like a star across the centuries.

The Danish invasion and occupation had the effect not of dismaying but of uniting England. The warring Anglo-Saxons laid aside their hostilities, massed themselves under one government, settled down with the solid resisting power of their race around the territory the invaders had seized, and under Alfred's successors began, in 910, the reconquest of the Danelaw. By 954 the subjugation was completed, and the Northmen melted into the mass of Englishmen, the effect of their intrusion being marked only by the number of Danish words\* which have become an indistinguishable part of English speech. Though at a later time Danish bands ravaged parts of England; though the vigorous Danish conqueror Cnut (Canute) seated himself on the English throne, and aspired to make England the basis of a great Danish empire; though he was able to transmit his power to his sons Harold and Harthacnut, so that England was for a quarter of a century (1016-1042) under the rule of Danish kings, these events amounted to no more than incursions of robbers and changes of dynasty—the

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\* Such words as *awe*, *call*, *crave*, *fellow*, *get*, *hit*, *husband*, *knife*, *leg*, *loft*, *loose*, *low*, *odd*, *root*, *same*, *scant*, *skin*, *take*, *thrall*, *want*, *wrong*, and a multitude of others.

breaking of stormy waves upon the rocks, leaving the shore-line of racial and national integrity unchanged. Cnut was able to govern England only because he dismissed his Danish troops, gave up his barbaric ferocity, accepted the English civilization, religion, and law, and made himself, to all intents and purposes, an English king.

Through all, England held its own. England was England still, and, after twenty-five years of Danish rule, the line of Alfred returned and was welcomed to the throne in 1041, under a weak but lineal descendant, whom his people remembered chiefly for his piety, by the name of "Edward the Confessor." He became king, not of Wessex or Northumberland, not of Kent or Mercia, but of England. As such he reigned for twenty-five years, until his death in the very year of the Norman Conquest.

Through such a history as this was evolved that Anglo-Saxon language which has become the basis of English speech.



II

**ANGLO-SAXON ACHIEVEMENT**



## II

### ANGLO-SAXON ACHIEVEMENT

THE clearest and most vigorous English speech of the twentieth century has its source in the language of the peoples who crossed the North Sea from the continent of Europe, conquered Britain and made it England fifteen hundred years ago. Through all wars and changes the language of those ancient conquerors—which has received the book-name of Anglo-Saxon—has stubbornly held its own, so that at present the proportion of Anglo-Saxon in modern English, exclusive of scientific and technical terms, is about five-eighths; in the vocabulary of conversation, four-fifths.

Modern English has borrowed freely from Latin, French, German, and every other tongue known among men, but the children of the English-speaking races all start in life with the Anglo-Saxon. The children of the scholar, the author, the statesman, all bring into his home and to his table that simple, ancient speech; they regard our abstract terms and elegant synonyms from many lands as “grown-up language,” which they can not be expected to speak and will not if they can help it, and which they do not even understand until they have translated it into the familiar homespun of the primeval English. The charm and vividness that mark the conversa-

tion of cultured English-speaking women are largely due to their constant use of those terse, simple monosyllabic or dissyllabic words of the ancient speech, with which they deal in swift, sure utterance, ever bringing the most recondite matters into touch with the fireside and the home and the whole range of common human life. On the sea, in the camp, on the battle-field, in the forest or the mountains, in all adventure, stress and strain, in all sudden downright decision, and in times of deepest and most tender emotion, these simple, old-time words are the ones that spring unbidden to the lips of English-speaking men.

Anglo-Saxon is the bed-rock of the English language. In the present structure, tower, battlement and turret have been fashioned according to the architecture of many lands, but all rest secure on that original and imperishable foundation. In the fabric of English as it exists to-day, borrowed portions may be likened to embroidery, often very beautiful, and wrought into elegant patterns, while the substantial original canvas that gives body to the whole and holds it in unity is the Anglo-Saxon.

Reviewing their history from their early invasion as the Roman Empire fell to the time when they themselves were subdued in the Norman Conquest, many are ready to ask, What had the Anglo-Saxons done in six hundred years? They had no architecture, no art worthy of especial mention, and but a limited literature, which the world now cares for

only as it harks back from later glories to those far originals. The English still remained a rude agricultural and sea-faring people. By all their fierce and resolute conquest of England, what, it may be asked, had they accomplished after all?

For one thing, *they had lived*. They had held the island, once conquered, in firm possession. What the Britons had not been able to do against them, they had done against all comers. They had asked no pirate hordes to defend them against Picts and Scots; but when new hosts of North-Sea pirates had descended upon England, those Anglo-Saxon Englishmen had worn out, by their enduring valor on land and sea, the persistent ferocity of Danes and Northmen, till, at length, they had shut them in, subdued them on the very soil they had conquered, and finally absorbed them into the mass of the English people, making the valor and hardihood of the barbarian hosts elements of the strength of that wonderful fusion of races whose power and name and speech have become proudly known around the world.

They had *evolved a new people*, so distinctive in character as to be called the "English race." Through the darkest periods of their early history shone out the qualities that have everywhere marked their existence and their advance—steady, resolute, enduring, often stubborn; practical, often unduly devoted to the concrete and the commonplace; tenacious of old, established facts, opinions, cus-

toms, and associations, building any new advantages only upon advances already made; home-loving, with a deep tenderness under a rugged exterior; with emotion that does not effervesce, but burns with white heat under a cold demeanor, expressing itself not in words but in deeds; capable of standing calmly on the sinking deck, passing the word "Women and children first," till all the weak and helpless have been saved; following the call of faith, loyalty, and duty, not merely into the face but into the very fact of death; ready to die for kindred or country with a still devotion that scarcely knows how to speak of love or patriotism, for which it is giving its all; able to blunder and fail, to be defeated, conquered, killed—but never dismayed, to be stubbornly resolute in retreating and never so dangerous as after a defeat. The maxim of their far-off sires ever pervaded their resolute ranks:

"The mind must be the firmer, the heart must be the keener,  
The mood must be the bolder, as our might lessenseth."

They had developed the wonderful resiliency that has ever since marked their race, that, after whatever repulse or defeat, when opportunity called anew, in what might seem the most unpropitious hour, it would find them ready—the only promise or omen needed being that they themselves were there. From their centuries of battle, they could not help being a martial people, avoiding when possible, as practical men, the waste and destruction of

war, yet always ready when necessary to respond to its call. Full of contrasts, but always sturdy, vigorous and mighty, the English race had come into being.

That race has the inexplicable quality, so highly prized in certain animal stocks, of "breeding true to type." The qualities of that type have come down unchanged through the centuries and have gone with the race around the world. The descendants of the English in Canada and the United States, in New Zealand and in Australia, are typical still. The Saxon king, Alfred the Great, was typically English, and to Americans he seems typically American, too. Tremendous in battle, when that was necessary, wise and shrewd in strategy, broad and statesmanlike in plans, seeing the need, when he had stopped the advance of the Danes already in England, to meet the new swarms of pirates on the ocean without waiting for them to set foot on the land, building around the "silver-coasted isle" the floating ramparts that guard her still; then, in the moment of victory, gladly laying aside the sword to rebuild the civilization that war had trampled down and, amid the cares of state, giving his nights, marked off by measured candles, to translating from the Latin such works as might best serve the clergy and people of his day,—we feel at home with him at once. He is a man who might live to-day on English ground. In his retirement among the marshes of Athelney, he reminds

Americans of our own Washington in the great winter at Valley Forge, that way-station on the road to victory at Yorktown.

Later we see the same type in many a hero of the American Civil War, doing in battle all that man might do, then laying off the warrior with the uniform, returning with delight to the well-loved home and the quiet pursuits of peace, becoming leader in business, a statesman or a scholar, happy to do some greater thing than to "see the standard and hear the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war."

To found the English race was by itself a mighty achievement. Call it good or evil, judge it as friend or foe, we must pronounce the English civilization evolved from the Anglo-Saxon conquest one of the mightiest facts of history. That civilization has stretched across oceans, continents and islands, and starred the world with its outposts; and the speech of those rude conquerors has become the substratum of the language now spoken by more than two hundred millions of men.

Those early Englishmen had conquered not only human foes but hostile nature. They had *mastered and developed the land*. Of course, such a work is progressive, and what was then considered a highly improved condition would be deemed very rude to-day. We can only estimate what they had done by comparing the land as they had made it with the land as they had found it.

"Scarcely one-sixth of the land was redeemed [under the Roman occupation]. When the English came, the forest-land opposed their advance continually. The fenlands of the east and the wide marshes of Somerset remained desolate. The great woods of Andred, of Arden, of Dean and of many others were still huge wastes where only the outlaw lived. Wales was one enormous woodland."

—STOPFORD A. BROOKE, "*English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest*, ch. I, p. II.

"Though Britain had long been Roman, her distance from the seat of empire left her less Romanized than any other province of the west. . . . Its natural defenses threw obstacles in its invaders' way. In the forest belts which stretched over vast spaces of country they found barriers which in all cases checked their advance, and in some cases finally stopped it. The Kentishmen and the South Saxons were brought utterly to a standstill by the Andredsweald. The East Saxons could never pierce the woods of their western border. The Fens proved impassable to the Northfolk and to the Southfolk of East-Anglia. It was only after a long and terrible struggle that the West Saxons could hew their way through the forests which sheltered the 'Gwent' of the southern coast. Their attempt to break out of the circle of woodland which girt in the downs was in fact fruitless for thirty years; and in the height of their later power they were thrown back from the forests of Cheshire.

"It is only by realizing in this way the physical as well as the moral circumstances of Britain that we can understand the character of its earlier conquest. Field by field, town by town, forest by forest, the land was won."

—GREEN, "*History of the English People*," vol. i, p. 42.

The Britain which, in Julius Cæsar's day, was inhabited by scattered tribes of savages had been developed into the England which supported a settled

and industrious population of 1,500,000 at the advent of William the Conqueror, according to estimates made from the records of the Domesday Book. English gold-work and embroidery had become famous in the markets of Flanders and of France. London had become a thriving commercial city.

"Men of the Empire, traders of Lower Lorraine and the Rhineland, men of Rouen, traders of the new Norman duchy of the Seine, were seen in the streets of London. It was in Eadgar's day (958-975), indeed, that London rose to the commercial greatness it has held ever since."

—GREEN, "*History of the English People*," vol. i, p. 127.

As we read of the fierce resistance of the Britons to the invaders for two hundred and fifty years, of the wars of the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms one against another, of the wars of the various claimants to the throne within every kingdom, and then of the disastrous inroads of the Danes, we wonder that anything was left. The constant mustering of armies, the plundering, slaying, and burning from end to end of England, make it seem as if the whole land must have become a wilderness and its people well-nigh extinct. Yet through all and in spite of all, the English people grew rich and great. England was a far more desirable conquest for the Normans than Britain had been for the Angles and Saxons.

Already the English race had developed that "practical quality" which impels them to make whatever land they occupy habitable and productive, and

which has made them the foremost colonizers of the world. Wherever the Englishman has gone as a colonizer he has gone as a builder. Spain conquered in the sixteenth century the rich, populous and prosperous empires of Mexico and Peru, stripped off and carried away by the shipload the gold, silver, and gems already produced, and left the mines that produced them to sink into a decay from which they have not yet recovered; allowed the noble systems of irrigation that made wide districts fertile to fall into ruin, though the very ruins are among the wonders of the world; wore out the native people by brutal slavery until now, aside from the small number of pure-blooded descendants of the conquerors, only a thin population of half-breed peons struggle for subsistence where once proud empires flourished. A century later English colonists landed on the then desolate shores of North America, with its forbidding climate and stubborn soil. Forests tenanted by wandering savages stretched before them farther than eye could reach or foot explore. The English adventurers founded towns upon the shore, hewed down the forests, clearing field by field and farm by farm, toiled and fought their way ever westward, till the United States and Canada span the continent with ever-increasing prosperity from the Atlantic to the far Pacific. They have done for North America what their ancestors did for Britain. The new continent was but a larger island, not to be ravaged and

plundered, but to be improved, cultivated, people all subdued to the use of man, made habitable and self-supporting and enriched by the profitable trade of all the world. Men of all nations have aided the process, but they have been dominated by the impulse of the original settlers. The shaping, controlling power has been that of the Anglo-Saxon race, coming as settlers, cultivators, builders of homes and towns and cities, to make the earth yield her increase for the welfare of humanity, while the abundance of the seas should be brought in to minister to ever-increasing prosperity. How different are the settlers from many other lands whom we see to-day in the immigrant cities where they first set foot,—those who have been agricultural laborers at home herding here in forlorn streets and alleys, in intolerable tenements, in garrets and cellars, out of touch with the soil, their children growing up incompetent for the simplest work of farm or garden, surprised and almost scared if any chance brings them to see the open land and growing things. The mastery of soil and sea for the subsistence and enrichment of a lifetime, of generations, by toil and thrift, is the Anglo-Saxon system, wrought out in ancient days in the hard-won conquest and occupation of England.

The Anglo-Saxons *had founded a nation*. Their once scattered tribes, constantly at war with one another for centuries, were at last merged into one coherent national organization, with one king, whose

authority was accepted from the Channel to the Tweed, with one system of government and law, and with one national army and navy. England had taken a distinct place among the nations. When Harold was expecting the Norman invasion, he hurried with an army to the coast of Yorkshire, where he met and defeated an invading host from Norway; then he was forced to hasten back with his victorious but wearied army to meet the Normans, who had already landed and begun their advance. But his army, through both campaigns, was the English army, and his battles were not for Northumbria, Essex, Wessex, Kent or Mercia, but for England. That deep unity of organization and of spirit had been attained which has made the name of England an inspiring and controlling watchword for all her sons in every quarter of the globe on land or sea, as when Nelson, centuries after, had only to repeat that one commanding name in his immortal battle-signal, "*England* expects every man to do his duty."

The Anglo-Saxons had built *an absolutely new system of civilization, government and law*. The shadow of the defunct Roman Empire still lay deep and dark over all the realms her legions had once held on the continent of Europe, and most of them have not wholly escaped it to this hour. But, alone of all the successors of the Roman Empire, England did not inherit from Rome. Goths, Huns, Vandals, Franks, all were mastered by the empire they over-

threw. In France, Italy, and Spain, the speech of the descendants of the invaders is still a modified Latin. All kept the ideal of empire and emperor. As soon as Charlemagne had established his dominion, he was crowned in Rome itself "Emperor of the West." Germany became part of the Holy Roman Empire, and her last emperor bore the name of Kaiser,—"Cæsar."

"In the eyes of the West and of the Church in the West, Charlemagne and his successors, who were crowned by the Pope, were regarded as the successors of Augustus and Antoninus, as the true temporal heads of the Holy Roman Empire."

—BARING-GOULD, "*The Story of Germany*," ch. x, p. 65

Roman imperialism had done much to civilize but much also to degrade the world. At the height of the Roman supremacy the imperialistic system and polity had become a cancer infecting the whole body politic, till the once mighty organism could not even stand alone, but went down like a house of cards before the onrush of undeveloped, but also unspoiled, barbarians. But the virus of the malign system pervaded every part of the wreck, so that out of those ruins no structure could be built that would not suffer from the retained evils of the vanished despotism. It was natural for Spain to yield to a Charles V or a Philip II, for France to bow to a Richelieu and a Louis XIV, since in them they were submitting to the still mighty reminiscence of the Roman Cæsar. The ideal of the continental nations

was still that of subjugation under the resistless hand of a supreme master.

There was one nation of the western world, and but one, that did not inherit from Rome its civilization, its laws, or its polity.

"The arrival of the Saxons prevented this island from being the home of a Romanesque people like the French or Spanish."

—EARLE, "*Philology of the English Tongue*," sect. 2, p. 23.

By the ferocity of their early conquests they had swept from the soil of Britain the British people who had learned to bow under the Roman yoke. They had destroyed everything of Roman occupation that was destructible, leaving only the imperishable Roman roads, leading to the fire-swept ruins of deserted cities and villas. The English race had started nationality anew, asking no example and no privilege from any antiquity other than its own. Though for centuries it derived its philosophy, its religion, and much of its literature from early sources through the Latin speech, England took all these electively, choosing what suited the English temper and consorted with English judgment and thought. Though Christianity came to them from Rome and the English were members of the Roman Church, yet the Church of England, even before the Reformation, held much distinctive independence, and English ecclesiastics and kings resented direct control from Rome. The one ambition of the English conquest, effectually achieved, had been to

clear the ground for a new civilization which should be all their own. Their persistent determination in the centuries following had been to keep for England all that was essentially English. They had come to have a passion for nationality. Their own land, their own people, their own customs and civilization, they held dear, in part because they had been compelled to fight so long and so bitterly for them. Moored alongside the continent of Europe, separated only by the North Sea and the narrow but stormy Channel, England lived its own life, thought its own thought, developed its own nationality.

It was time for Roman Imperialism to die. The basis of Roman society in the decline of the Republic and under the Empire was slavery. A century before Augustus came to the throne, the Gracchi had complained that slave labor was driving freemen off the soil of Italy. In the time of Claudius, according to Gibbon's estimate, "the slaves were at least equal in number to the free inhabitants of the Roman world." Farm laborers were slaves, mechanics were slaves, household servants were slaves, secretaries, amanuenses, and clerks were slaves, often far superior in learning and culture to the masters whose chattels they were. One maxim of Roman law sufficiently reveals their status, that "the testimony of a slave could be received only under torture." The basis of society among the people who founded England was the freeman, the "free-necked man," who had never bowed his head to a

master. Such slavery as existed among them was for the most part the villenage of serfs bound to the soil, who ultimately rose to freedom with the advance of the society amid which they lived.

"Moral causes noiselessly effaced the distinction between master and slave. . . . Some faint traces of the institution of villenage were detected by the curious so late as the days of the Stuarts, nor has that distinction ever, to this hour, been abolished by statute."

—MACAULAY, "*History of England*," vol. I, ch. 1, p. 14.

A system which could thus noiselessly fade away could not have been very extensive or very deeply rooted. Slavery was almost a negligible incident of early English civilization.\* Individual freedom was the basis, the ideal, of that civilization. Hence the honor everywhere accorded to labor among the English people. Scions and imitators of aristocracy there have always been to scorn it, but on the whole the Englishman has always been proud of his capacity to do strongly whatever human hands may do. Notably the extension of the English race across the North American continent has been chiefly due to the sturdy young men who have started out from home in every generation, each for himself, with no capital but his hands and his brain, each trenchantly described as "full of days' works," to conquer some new tract of wilderness. Such a society of freemen can do what no agglom-

\* This fact joins with other historical data to show that the Britons were swept away before their conquerors, and not enslaved, which would have loaded the new nation from the beginning with a great slave population.

eration of masters and slaves could ever accomplish.

The basis of Roman government under the Empire was the emperor's absolute will. He could send a message to any citizen in Rome or in the provinces, however eminent, commanding him to take his own life, or to go into banishment in some savage wilderness or on some desolate island, and the victim would die without attempt to escape, or set forth on his journey into exile without officer or guard.

"The empire of the Romans filled the world, and when that empire fell into the hands of a single person, the whole world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. The slave of Imperial despotism, whether he was condemned to drag his gilded chain in Rome and the Senate or to wear out a life of exile on the barren rock of Seriphus, or the frozen banks of the Danube, expected his fate in silent despair. To resist was fatal, and it was impossible to fly. On every side he was encompassed with a vast extent of sea and land, which he could never hope to traverse without being discovered, seized, and restored to his irritated master. Beyond the frontiers his anxious view could discover nothing except the ocean, inhospitable deserts, hostile tribes of barbarians, of fierce manners and unknown language, or dependent kings, who would gladly purchase the emperor's protection by the sacrifice of an obnoxious fugitive."

—GIBBON, "*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*,"  
vol. i, ch. 3, p. 99.

To this must be added the constant presence of a great army of spies, traveling back and forth on all the Roman roads, and reporting at the capital all they could discover, even in the remotest province, so that they were called "the eyes of the emperor."

No man, however high or humble his station, could be sure that any act or word of his life might not be reported with sinister aggravation to the watching imperial overlord.

Despotism such as this Englishmen never knew and have never imagined as a possibility of existence. "Conquest," says Green, "begat the king. It seems probable that the English had hitherto known nothing of kings in their own fatherland."

"A general of the tribe was elected on occasions of danger; and, if the danger was pressing and extensive, several tribes concurred in the choice of the same general. The bravest warrior was named to lead his countrymen into the field, by his example rather than by his commands. But this power, however limited, was still invidious. It expired with the war, and in time of peace the German tribes acknowledged not any supreme chief. (*Cæsar de Bell. Gall. vi, 23.*)"

—GIBBON, "*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*," vol. i, ch. 9, p. 265.

The Anglo-Saxon conquerors had, moreover, brought with them from their early homes freedom and parliaments, the *folkmotes*, or people's meetings, the *witenagemote* or meeting of wise men, where matters affecting the community were decided by the voices of freemen—often by the applauding clang of spear on shield or by deep groans of negation which no chieftain might safely disregard.

"In the 'great meeting' of the *witenagemote*, or assembly of the wise, lay the rule of the realm. It represented the whole English people, as the *wisemoots* of each kingdom represented the separate peoples of each; and its powers

were as supreme in the wider field as theirs in the narrower. *It could elect or depose the king.* To it belonged the higher justice, the imposition of taxes, the making of laws, the conclusion of treaties, the control of wars, the disposal of the public lands, the appointment of great officers of state."

—GREEN, "*History of the English People,*" vol. i, ch. 4,  
p. 123.

The germ of the present English constitution was already there. Representative government was embedded deep in the life of the people. Thus, after royalty was thoroughly established in England, the king was still regarded as deriving his power from the people. This was never more clearly shown than on the eve of the Norman conquest. On the death of Edward the Confessor, the direct heir to the throne, of the line of Alfred, was still a child, and the Witan set him aside because he was still a child, and elected Harold to the throne because he was a warrior and statesman such as at that crisis the nation needed.

This right did not lapse at the Norman Conquest. Though William the Conqueror won the mastery of England by the sword, he was glad to receive the crown by the gift of the nation, as offered by a parliamentary embassy, and confirmed in his coronation at Westminster by the Archbishop of York, amid shouts of "Yea! Yea!" from his new English subjects. After the right had been overlooked during a century and a half of Norman misgovernment, King John was sharply reminded

of it when the embattled barons and people of England exacted his assent to the Great Charter, under peril, as he and they well knew, of the forfeiture of his crown. Magna Carta reaffirmed the Anglo-Saxon right, and made it the indestructible basis of government under all kings of the Norman line. At Runnymede a deep line was drawn separating forever the royalty of England from the royalty of every other European nation. There the break which the Anglo-Saxons had effected from Roman imperialism was made perpetual so long as the English constitution endures.

Courtiers and ecclesiastics brought in later the doctrine of the "divine right" of kings, but their theory never took root in the thought of the people. Three centuries after the Norman Conquest Richard II was set aside and Henry IV made king by the action of Parliament. The Cromwellian revolution was but the assertion of the same right of Parliament and people, through the violence of civil war. The revolution of 1688 was an assertion of the ancient right, when Parliament deposed James II, under the legal fiction of his "abdication," and not only made his daughter queen but made her husband king, not as the consort of Mary but in his own right, proclaiming "William and Mary King and Queen"; and this conditioned upon their acceptance of the Declaration and Bill of Rights, narrowly limiting the prerogatives of the crown. Through all wars, all periods of civil strife, all transient

epochs of royal tyranny, this principle endured which the English people inherited from their Anglo-Saxon sires, that the royal authority was dependent upon the people's will. It was the same doctrine asserted by Americans in their Declaration of Independence:

"That to secure these rights [to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness], governments are instituted among men, *deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed*; and that when any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, *it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it*, and to institute a new government," etc.

More truly than they themselves were then aware, the Americans of 1776 were contending, as Edmund Burke declared, "not for the rights of men but for the rights of Englishmen." These principles had been so long imbedded in the English constitution that the descendants of Englishmen "held them to be self-evident." It was because they were not some new theory, which might be abandoned, but the reaffirmation of immemorial rights that the English colonists on American soil could hold to them through seven long years of war, and cherish them afterwards as the dearest fruits of victory.

It would be idle to pretend that the Anglo-Saxons enjoyed perfect liberty. Their system of government was very crude, but it was on the sound basis of popular rights. It embodied a true ideal capable of expanding into the popular liberty which English-

men and Americans now enjoy. The very thought of Lincoln at Gettysburg, "government of the people, by the people and for the people," was but the underlying principle of the earliest English civilization, enriched, deepened, but not superseded, by the study and experience of centuries. The foundations of English and American liberty were laid in the Anglo-Saxon day. It was much that humanity should somewhere begin an unsubjugated life. Britain was the one province of the Roman world where this was possible, and it was possible there because every vestige of Roman dominion had been swept away with fire and sword, and the island began its new life not as Britain but as England.

The Anglo-Saxon conquerors had established *a distinctive system of law*, which has grown through centuries into the Common Law of England. As their system of government was wholly different from Roman imperialism, so their system of law was wholly different from the Roman law. Dr. Frederick W. Maitland says:\*

"Eyes, carefully trained, have minutely scrutinized the Anglo-Saxon texts without finding the least trace of a Roman rule outside the ecclesiastical sphere."

Of the period of Henry VIII, when "Roman law swept like a flood over Germany," he says that in England "it is no record of alien jurisprudence that must be chronicled but a marvelous resuscitation of English medieval law."

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\* Article on *English Law*, "Encyclopedia Britannica," vol. ix.  
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In spite of the break at the Norman Conquest, the continuity of the old English law, which had never been abandoned, was established when Henry I, the son of the Conqueror, solemnly reaffirmed the laws of Edward the Confessor (that is, the Anglo-Saxon laws existing under that reign). Their substance was affirmed anew in the Magna Carta of King John.

"The English Common Law may be described as a pre-eminently national system. Based on Saxon constitutions, molded by Norman lawyers, and jealous of foreign systems, it is, as Bacon says, as mixed as the English language and as truly national. And, like the language, it has been taken into other English-speaking countries, and is the father of the law in the United States."

—*"Encyclopedias Britannica,"* vol. vi, p. 778.

The *Jus civile*, the Civil Law of Rome, was of necessity pervaded by the imperialistic conception of the entire Roman government. It may be said in very general terms that the ideal of the Roman law was repression, while that of the English law was protection. We see the care for the rights of the individual in the great principles and maxims of English law: that no man may be required to give evidence which would incriminate himself; that no man may be put in jeopardy twice for the same offense; in the maxim that "it is better that ten guilty men escape than that one innocent man should be punished"; in the rights of *habeas corpus* and of trial by jury. Common Law has faults enough, and much of the study of English jurists

has been to remedy those faults. Still, as a system, it aims to safeguard the rights of the citizen, so that where it prevails the citizen appeals to the law as once the Roman citizens would "appeal unto Cæsar."

They had built up *an individualistic civilization*, of which their laws and their national polity were but the concrete expression. Even the Roman historian Tacitus remarks the personal independence of their Germanic ancestors in their old home, how they dwelt alone, each in his own little dwelling. Not only was each habitation independent in the early Anglo-Saxon days, but each settlement had the same guarded independence. Around every village was a space of common land which none might appropriate, and any stranger crossing this ground must blow a horn to announce his approach, as otherwise he might be taken for an enemy and killed by the first one meeting him. Still this love of separate homes is deep in the hearts of the English and of all their descendants. Even in closely settled towns and villages they love the little yards enclosed by fence or hedge, marking each plot of ground as "private property" of those who dwell there. Employers of labor prefer in many callings newly arrived foreigners to native Americans because "Americans do not like to work in gangs." We find the strong tendency to individualism in the love of home, which is so strong a passion among all descendants of the English race—not merely love

of native land but of the very abode around which cluster the dearest memories of childhood and the love of maturer life. We find it in the English maxim that "every man's house is his castle"; in the opposition to the right of search, except as closely and narrowly limited by specific law. By this Pitt symbolizes the independence of the individual under the laws of England:

"The poorest man may in his cottage bid defiance to all the power of the Crown. It may be frail; its roof may shake; the wind may blow through it; the storms may enter, the rain may enter,—but the King of England can not enter. All his forces dare not cross the threshold of that ruined tenement."

We see the same quality manifested in the freedom of speech and of the press that prevails in England and her colonies and in the United States to an extent known nowhere else on earth.

The individualist civilization is alone immortal, because its life is supplied by countless new centers of force, ever varying and ever renewed. It is only by crushing individual initiative that imperialism ever becomes, or can become, great, and by that victory it dries up the very sources of supply needed to sustain its own power. The imperialist civilization is doomed to inevitable decay, because all its myriad lives are but suckers at the base of one mighty stem, repressed and dwarfed by the overshadowing greatness of the one. The vitality of a family, of a school, a university, a business or a

nation will be ruined by too much control and discipline. Every aristocracy declines except as it is reinvigorated with new blood by members who "marry below their station." Every dynasty decays. Every despotism dies of dry-rot. A great nation can continue great only by the new and infinitely varying vigor of multitudinous lives in free and unrepressed activity and expansion.

To have built such a civilization and won for it a place of honor and power among the nations is an achievement well worth the toil, struggles and battles of six hundred years, and justified by the triumphs of well-nigh a thousand years since it first became an accomplished fact upon earth.

This wonderful people *had created a new language* of distinct individuality and singular endurance. Of the Teutonic family, kindred to the Gothic, Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish, and German, yet like no one of these, and wholly unlike the Romance languages, whose empire began just south of the narrow Channel and extended through France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy to the Mediterranean, the Anglo-Saxon stood distinct from all. From the Celtic, shut in with it in the North and West of the same island, it was separated by a racial antipathy which has been so persistent that though Celtic influences have made their way into English literature, Celtic words have never formed any large part either of the Anglo-Saxon or of the English language. Though the English language was later,

under the stress of the Norman Conquest, to adopt numerous elements from the French and the ancient classic tongues, yet in its early independence it neither asked nor welcomed aid from any other speech except where, as through the church, some few words were accepted for which, in its own vocabulary, there were no equivalents. Through all changes and vicissitudes, and in its widest extension, the Anglo-Saxon has held, and still holds, its original type, and is to-day the fundamental and dominant element of English speech. It seems to be an expression of the life of the race that produced it, and as indestructible as that race.

The Anglo-Saxon language was one of remarkable simplicity. This is due in part to the shortness of its words, which are prevailingly monosyllabic or dissyllabic. In modern English this is often said to be due to the fact that the longer Anglo-Saxon words fell into disuse after the Norman Conquest. But this explanation, while to a certain extent true, is still inadequate. One need only look at the old Anglo-Saxon poems, as of Beowulf or Layamon, and, without knowing the Anglo-Saxon language, his eye will tell him, as it ranges down page after page, that most of those words are of one or two syllables each. Any longer word is quite sure to be a proper name or some inflected form of a short word increased by an ending. The tendency to short, strong words was deep in the life of the people. The Anglo-Saxons were not a speculative,

meditative, philosophical, nor to any great extent a poetic or romantic, people. They lived very close to the external world. They dealt chiefly with the concrete and the obvious—the practical. Their very poems were largely narrative, devoted mainly to the exploits, the toils or the hard fights of heroes, or, in the Christian period, of saints scarcely to be distinguished from warriors; their moral lessons were quite likely to be conveyed by a story of some personified virtues or vices, depicted as very crudely real in countenance, form, bearing and dress. Imaginative touches in their narratives came in but incidentally, to give vividness to the story.

Anglo-Saxon men were warriors, sailors, farmers, and traders. Their preference was for brief, rugged words to express actual objects and practical activities. Their language is constructed as if they had said, "Why use two syllables where one will do?" They were not concerned with the melody but with the efficiency of their speech. Their ambition was not for a language of rippling rhythm but for one of concrete facts and of doing things. They loved strong consonants and plenty of them, with only vowels enough to float the consonants. Thus the very word "strong" has five substantial consonants with but one vowel. The corresponding noun in the old Anglo-Saxon was "strengthu," but the tendency to shortening went on until it developed the English word "strength," where a single vowel must do duty for seven consonants. Yet with that

combination we feel perfectly satisfied and very much at home.

How insistent the monosyllabic tendency of the language was we see by what it did to the words it adopted in the early day from the Latin and the Greek. The Latin *clericus* became the Anglo-Saxon *clerc* (English *clerk*) ; the Latin *monachus* became the Anglo-Saxon *munuc*, later contracted into the English *monk* (which, though spelled with an *o*, is pronounced with a *u*) ; while the Greek *kyriakon*, "the Lord's house," became the Anglo-Saxon *circe*, which, by some almost unimaginable change, has been contracted into the English word *church*. The monosyllabic tendency became the genius of the Anglo-Saxon, and through that element has become a controlling influence in the English language. The constant abbreviation of words to some short, compact form is one of the most familiar facts in our modern English speech. The Greek-Latin compound, *automobile*, becomes the "auto," or is superseded by the simple word "car"; the *aeroplane* is constantly called the "plane"; the Greek derivative *telephone*, both as verb and noun, is commonly contracted into "phone"; while the Greek word *telegraph*, both as verb and noun, is to a great extent supplanted by the plain English monosyllable "wire"; and when Zeppelin dirigibles were seen approaching London, the word was passed, "Here come the *Zeps!*" Our language is full of monosyllabic or dissyllabic words so perfectly shaped upon the

Anglo-Saxon model that only a close study of the dictionary can enable us to know that they are not of native origin. The ancient Anglo-Saxon brevity of forms has become a dominant factor in English speech.

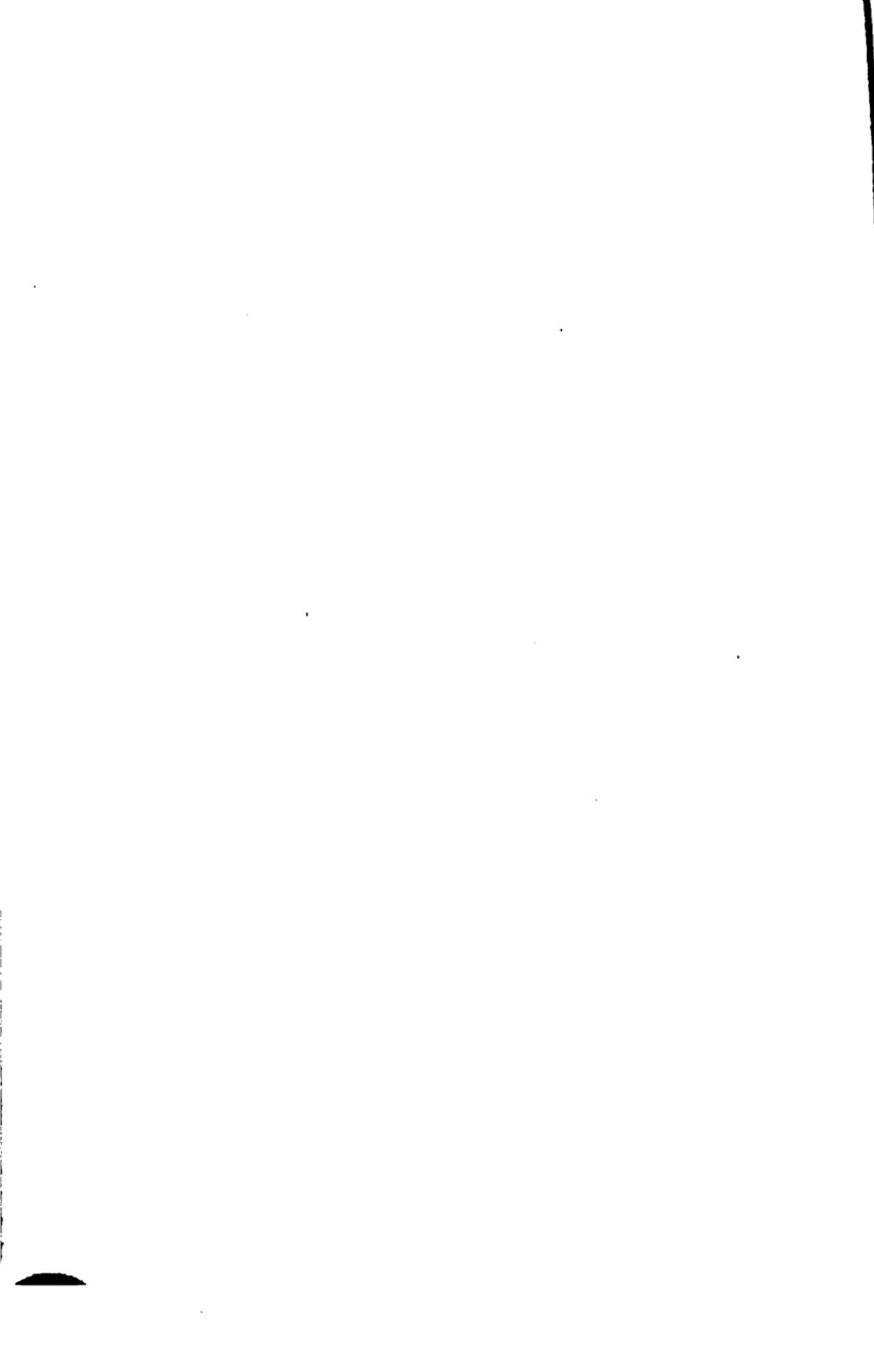
These short words are readily learned and easily remembered. It is very common for children to catch them by one hearing. This fact must be an important aid to the ready and wide diffusion of the English language, which has become so striking a fact in modern times. For the same reason these become the words of the common people. The common people now, as in ancient days, are first and most directly concerned with the outward, concrete realities of home, food, and shelter, of daily work and wages, of heat and cold, hunger and thirst, storm or sunshine, of health or sickness, hurt and pain, or cheer and comfort. With the advance of popular freedom and education, the common people are becoming an ever-increasing factor in the affairs of nations and in all the great movements of the world. To help them, to guide them, to instruct them, to control them,—even to please them,—one must speak or write largely in the simple, strong, homely and homelike Anglo-Saxon that has become the substantial basis of the mighty English language as it exists to-day.

Nor must it be forgotten that the simplicity of English grammar, later perfected by the fusion of the Anglo-Saxon with the Norman-French, had

begun long before the Norman Conquest. As the various tribes of Jutes, Angles, Saxons, Danes and Scandinavians toiled, traveled, traded, intermarried, or even as they met in each others' realms, as invaders or invaded, as conquerors or conquered, in their ceaseless wars, they were constantly learning each others' speech; they were working out that great law that, when kindred languages meet and blend, while words are interchanged, inflections and intricate grammatical idioms fall away. Hence, the Anglo-Saxon, while still an inflected language, had become quite simple in construction even in the days of Alfred, and became increasingly so up to the Norman Conquest. The habit of dropping troublesome idioms and inflections had been established. Simplicity of construction was already a marked quality of that early English, and had prepared the way for the final throwing aside of all that was intricate and complicated in grammar when the early English united with the Norman-French in the centuries following the battle of Hastings. The simplicity of English had become a recognized fact and a strong tendency before that day, and this simplicity has become an important element of its prominence and power among the languages of the world.

III

**THE NORMAN TRANSFORMATION**



### III

## THE NORMAN TRANSFORMATION

THE Anglo-Saxons had achieved much, but they had reached their limit. They had evolved a stationary civilization. Successful in agriculture and trade, they seemed satisfied to hold what they had so hardly won, content with mere existence,—which, indeed, they had been forced to make the supreme object of toil and conflict from ancient days. In their sea-girt isle they lay, like a bull-dog in his kennel, dangerous to approach, asking no more than to be undisturbed in their comfortable isolation.

Even in war, which had been so largely the main business of life for them, both as individuals and as a nation, they had made no improvement and almost no change. While the continental nations had developed cavalry to a high degree of perfection, clothing both the mounted knight and his horse in armor of steel, the English were practically destitute of cavalry. Robert Wace, the Norman poet and chronicler, says of them: "The English know not how to joust or to bear arms on horseback." The Normans had adopted chivalry, knighthood and tournaments, and carried the system to a perfection before unknown. But still, as in the ancient days, the English warrior rode his horse to the battle-line, then dismounted, and sent the

animal to the rear. Of what use was a horse to a man who did not mean to run away? Harold did this very thing at the battle of Hastings, dismounting at the opening of the battle, to fight and to fall on foot, at the base of the royal standard, while his true men fell around him, occupying in death the very ground on which they had stood in life. William the Norman, on the contrary, had three horses killed under him that day, and his swift dashes on horseback enabled him to be successively in all parts of the field and in personal touch with, all the movements and needs of his men.

Though the English bowmen afterwards became so formidable and so famous, with their tough yew-bows and their cloth-yard shafts, the English of Harold's day appear to have had no archers. Probably they despised the bow as the weapon of a man who sought to strike his enemy from a distance without daring to come to close quarters, and who, when attacked, depended on his lightness and speed in running away rather than on his courage to stand and fight. The Normans, on the other hand, had developed archery. It was still imperfect, but it gave them their victory at Hastings, as missile weapons, fitly used, always will prove superior to stationary defenses.

The English reliance was on the "shield-wall," which for centuries had been "good enough" for their fathers and for them—where stalwart men stood shoulder to shoulder, their shields meeting

across their breasts, and behind these, in every man's hand, the sword or axe to strike down an assailant who ventured too near. This battle-formation they had made practically perfect for its purpose, so that every Norman who broke through the barricade at Hastings was slain in front of the shield-wall, the English smiting them down with the short fierce cry of "Out! Out!" William himself despaired of breaking it until, as the day drew to a close, he ordered his archers to shoot into the air, so that their arrows would fall from above on the English line, when the shield-wall became useless, and Harold himself fell, struck in the eye by one of the despised weapons against which his mighty axe, that had smitten down horse and rider at a single blow, was no defense. Nothing is more impressive in the story of that eventful day of Hastings or Senlac than, on the one side, the versatility of the Normans, foiled and repulsed again and again but trying one device after another throughout the long day; and, on the other side, the inflexibility of the English, standing like rocks, adhering to their predetermined plan, and, even after defeat, rallying in the gathering darkness still to hold off the foe.

The battle was spectacular, the story thrilling, as the consequences were momentous:

"In the eleventh century there is a single year and a single day which stand forth in a way in which no single day or year stands forth in the ages after them. There is no later year to compare to the year in which the crown

of England was worn by the last king of the old sacred and immemorial stock, by the first and last king who reigned purely because he was the best and bravest among his people, and by the first and last king who could boast that he held his kingdom purely of God and his own sword. There is no one day in later times to compare with that memorable morning when Northern and Southern Europe, when England and Normandy, when Harold and William, met face to face in the wager of battle on the day of Saint Calixtus (Oct. 14, 1066)."

—FREEMAN, "*Norman Conquest*," vol. III, ch. II, p. 4.

That day sharply precipitated a change that was bound to come. Whatever is stationary is doomed to disaster and threatened with destruction. The onward moving force of the world and of the universe will strain against it perilously, and will either remold it or sweep it away. If it can evolve from within itself some renewing, revivifying force, it may join the progress of the new age, rich and strong with experience of the old. If the changing force can not come by evolution from within, it will come by aggression or invasion from without. In the case of the Anglo-Saxons, who had now become the English, this changing, remolding power came, with cyclonic violence, in the Norman invasion.

Of the Normans we are told:\*

"Their character is well painted by a contemporary historian of their exploits, Geoffrey Malaterra (*Gaufridus à Malaterra*). He sets the Normans before us as 'a race especially marked by cunning, despising their own inheritance in the hope

\* Article on the *NORMANS* in the "*Encyclopædia Britannica*," by E. A. Freeman, author of the "*History of the Norman Conquest of England*."

of winning a greater, eager after both gain and dominion, given to imitation of all kinds, holding a certain mean between lavishness and greediness. Their chief men were especially lavish through their desire of good report. They were, moreover, a race skilful in flattery, given to the study of eloquence, so that the very boys were orators, a race altogether unbridled unless held firmly down by the yoke of justice. They were enduring of toil, hunger, and cold, whenever fortune laid it on them, given to hunting and hawking, delighting in the pleasures of horses, and of all weapons and garb of war.

"Several of these features stand out very clearly in Norman history. The cunning of the Normans is plain enough; so is their impatience of restraint, unless held down by a strong master. Love of imitation is also marked. Little of original invention can be traced to any strictly Norman source, but no people were ever more eager to adopt from other nations, to take into their service and friendship from any quarter then of learning and skill and eminence of every kind. To this quality is perhaps to be attributed the fact that a people who did so much, who settled and conquered in so large a part of Europe, has practically vanished from the face of the earth [that is, as Normans]. They adopted the French tongue, and were among the first to practise and spread abroad its literature. They adopted the growing feudal doctrines of France, and worked them both in Normandy and in England into a harmonious system. From northern Italy, as it would seem, they adopted a style of architecture which grew in their hands, both in Normandy and in England, into a marked and living form of art [a style characterized by the round arch and heavy,

massive columns]. Settled in Gaul, the Scandinavian, from a sea-faring man, became a landsman. Even in land-warfare he cast aside the weapons of his forefathers; but he soon learned to handle the weapons of his new land with greater prowess than they had ever been handled before."

In the realm of intellect, the Norman "welcomed the lore of every stranger":

"Lanfranc brought law and discipline; Anselm brought theology and philosophy. The gifts of each were adopted, and bore fruit on both sides of the Channel. And no people ever knew better how to be all things to all men. The Norman power in England was founded on full and speedy union with the one nation [the Anglo-Saxon] among whom they found themselves."

It was this union of races that made the English people and the English nation, and made them conquerors. Without this power of adaptation, if the Norman conquerors had remained a separate ruling caste, holding down the Saxons as serfs if they could, a great, murmuring, discontented host, ready at any time to side with any invader against their hated masters, England could not have held its own against the Armada or against Napoleon, not to speak of conquering. Because the Normans had the good sense and the pliancy to fuse with the sturdy, stubborn Saxons, the nation has inherited the mingled qualities of both the mighty races from which it sprung, and no enemy has ever been able

to play off Norman noble against Saxon serf, or Saxon serf against Norman noble. Every foe who has tried it has found one English people.

With the above-quoted description should be read Macaulay's splendid sketch:\*

"The Normans were then the foremost race of Christendom. Their valor and ferocity had made them conspicuous among the rovers whom Scandinavia had sent forth to ravage Western Europe. Their sails were long the terror of both coasts of the channel. Their arms were repeatedly carried far into the heart of the Carolingian empire, and were victorious under the walls of Maestricht and Paris. At length one of the feeble heirs of Charlemagne ceded to the strangers a fertile province, watered by a noble river, and contiguous to the sea, which was their favorite element. In that province they founded a mighty state, which gradually extended its influence over the neighboring principalities of Britanny and Maine. Without laying aside that dauntless valor which had been the terror of every land from the Elbe to the Pyrenees, the Normans rapidly acquired all, and more than all, the knowledge and refinement which they found in the country where they settled. Their courage secured their territory against foreign invasion. They established internal order, such as had long been unknown in the Frank empire. They embraced Christianity, and with Christianity they learned a great part of what the clergy had to teach. They abandoned their native speech and adopted the French tongue, in which the Latin was the predominant element. They speedily raised their new language to a dignity and importance which it had never before possessed. They found it a barbarous jargon; they fixed it in writing, and they employed it in legislation, in poetry and in romance. They renounced that brutal intemperance to which all the other branches of the great

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\* MACAULAY, "History of England," vol. I, ch. 1, p. 8.

German family were too much inclined. The polite luxury of the Norman presented a striking contrast to the coarse voracity and drunkenness of his Saxon and Danish neighbors. He loved to display his magnificence, not in huge piles of food and hogsheads of strong drink, but in large and stately edifices, rich armor, gallant horses, choice falcons, well ordered tournaments, banquets delicate rather than abundant, and wines remarkable rather for their exquisite flavor than for their intoxicating power. That chivalrous spirit which has exercised so powerful an influence on the politics, morals, and manners of all the European nations, was found in the highest exaltation among the Norman nobles. Those nobles were distinguished by their graceful bearing and insinuating address. They were distinguished also by their skill in negotiation and by a natural eloquence which they assiduously cultivated. It was the boast of one of their historians that the Norman gentlemen were orators from the cradle. But their chief fame was derived from their military exploits. Every country, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Dead Sea, witnessed the prodigies of their discipline and valor."

It must not be forgotten that the Normans were racially akin to the English whom they conquered, though both sides had long forgotten the relationship. Not Frenchmen but Normans conquered the Anglo-Saxon realm. England's trouble was still from the Northmen. Almost at the moment when, just after the death of Alfred the Great, the English had begun the reconquest of the "Danelaw," as the northeastern portion of England was called, which the Northmen known as "Danes" had subjugated—in 910—other hordes of the terrible Northmen, under Rolf or Rollo, known as the Ganger (the

Walker), had mastered territory in the north of France. They came as pirates, and their land was long known as the "pirates' land"; but the French king, Charles the Simple, deemed it wisest to cede the land and have the conquerors as subjects rather than as foes. Rolf was baptized, received the king's daughter in marriage, and became his vassal for the conquered territory, which he now received as a fief of France. As showing the temper of the newly settled barbarians, it is related that, in the course of the ceremony of doing homage for his land, Rolf was told that he must now kiss the king's foot. This he bluntly refused to do. Then a courtier suggested that he could do it by proxy, deputing one of his men to perform the service. The sturdy Northman detailed for the purpose obeyed his chief, but had no thought of kneeling before the king. He walked forward, seized the king's foot and lifted it for the kiss, with the result of throwing the king on his back. In view of the quality of their fierce guests, the French seem to have passed the incident without remark or protest. The name of Northman now came to be softened into Norman, and the newly acquired land of the Northmen or Normans came to be known as Normandy. Gradually the conquerors laid aside their barbarian customs and traits.

"No race has ever shown a greater power of absorbing all the nobler characteristics of the people with whom they came in contact, or of infusing their own energy into

them. During the long reign of Duke Richard the Fearless (grandson of Rolf), which lasted from 945 to 996, the heathen Northmen pirates became French Christians and feudal at heart. The old Norse language lived only at Bayeux and in a few local names. As the old Northern freedom died silently away, the descendants of the pirates became feudal nobles, and the 'pirates' land' sank into the most loyal of the fiefs of France."

—GREEN, "*History of the English People*," vol. I, bk. i, ch. 4, p. 142.

Thus Freeman, in his splendid description, errs in speaking of "Northern and Southern Europe" as in conflict on the battlefield of Hastings. Though citizens of France by adoption, the Normans were racially Northmen still. From the Anglo-Saxon Conquest of 449 to the Norman Conquest of 1066, all the peoples who conquered a place in England,—Jutes, Angles, Saxons, Danes and Normans,—were kindred in race. This fact made possible the complete union of these various types in the one English people, a union which has never crossed the line of the Celtic race; for Scots, Welsh, and Irish, while politically associated in the United Kingdom, are still separated from the English by distinct and distinctive racial peculiarities.

The vigor of the new Norman type is shown by the computation of time. From the recognized settlement of the Normans in France in 912 to their conquest of England in 1066 is but 154 years. In a century and a half they had developed from a pirate horde to one of the most advanced and cul-

tured peoples of their day, having adopted a new language, new customs in peace and war, and founded a distinctive and noble style of architecture. In that century and a half they had accomplished more in many ways than the Anglo-Saxons had done in six hundred years.

It seems probable that William the Conqueror at first meant to make himself an English king, as Cnut (or Canute) the Dane had done before him. The cases, however, were different. Cnut sent home all his forces except a body-guard of household troops, and relied wholly on his English subjects. But William was under actual or implied engagements to the mixed multitude of Norman and other adventurers who had aided him to win the English crown—engagements which could be fulfilled only by gifts of English baronies and lands. When these were administered by their new masters with utter disregard of the long recognized rights of English freemen, a national revolt arose, which was stamped out with such terrible severity that we wonder how the subjugated English could ever rise again. Of William's suppression of the rebellion in the North, we read:

"Town and village were harried and burned; their inhabitants were slain or driven over the Scottish border. . . . Crops, cattle, the very implements of husbandry, were so mercilessly destroyed that a famine which followed is said to have swept off more than a hundred thousand victims. Half a century later, indeed, the land

still lay bare of culture and deserted of men for sixty miles northward of York."

—GREEN, "*History of the English People*," vol. I, bk. i, ch. 4, p. 154.

It would seem that those once so utterly crushed must remain forevermore a subjugated race and their language become the unconsidered jargon of slaves.

But the staying power of the English race forced it to be still considered. William himself guardedly reaffirmed the laws of Edward the Confessor, "except for such changes as the reigning king had made for the good of the people of the English." He kept to a great extent the old local organizations and customs. Freeman says, "The most of his writs and other acts are in Latin, a good many are in English; not one is in French. The English writs of William follow the ancient formula." We do not need to wait, as we are often bidden to do, for the reign of John or of Edward III to find the return of the English people to power in the State. It began at the Conqueror's death, when his second son, William, secured the crown of England, while his elder brother, Robert, became but Duke of Normandy. Then the Norman baronage of England rose in arms in behalf of Robert, and it was only the support of the English people that gave William II the victory. After his death, when his younger brother, Henry, with even less of hereditary right, assumed the crown of England, he found his

Norman baronage ready to support the claims of Robert. Against this danger Henry's resource was to throw himself unreservedly upon the support of the English people. He gave them a charter of liberties, undoubtedly the model of the Great Charter of a later day. He promised to restore the English law—"the law of Edward"—as it existed before the Norman Conquest, and to relinquish and forbid all tyrannical exactions. As the pledge of all, he married a princess of the Saxon line, a direct descendant of Alfred, thus uniting in the royal family of England the blood of Anglo-Saxon and of Norman kings. Then, when Robert landed in England, depending on the support of the great barons, he found himself facing an English army, and deemed it wise to retire without a battle. Five years later Henry led an English army across the Channel and at Tenchebray, in 1106, defeated the Normans on their own soil, and made the duchy of Normandy a dependency of the English crown.

"Henceforth it was impossible that the two peoples should remain parted from each other; so quick, indeed, was their union that the very name of Norman had passed away in half a century, and at the accession of Henry's grandson (in 1154) it was impossible to distinguish between the descendants of the conquerors and those of the conquered at Senlac (Hastings)."

—GREEN, "*History of the English People*," vol. I, bk. ii, ch. 2, p. 182.

The Norman infusion had entered into the life of the English people. England did not become Nor-

man. As in England, before the Conquest, we see what the Anglo-Saxon was without the Norman, so in Normandy, after the Conquest, we see what the Norman was without the Anglo-Saxon. It was the union, the fusion, of the two kindred peoples that made the English people and the English language what they have been in modern history. The Norman spirit of adventure, enterprise and far-reaching ambition has modified the solid stability of the Saxon; Norman ideals of beauty, refinement, elegance, grace and courtesy, higher and finer than the Anglo-Saxon knew, came with the Norman knighthood and the Norman speech. Architecture, from the rude and imperfect previous endeavors, sprang suddenly into splendor and grandeur under Norman influence. Classical learning made great advances, and the knowledge and use of Latin was common among the cultured classes. The ready response of Norman venturesomeness to the Crusades increased knowledge of and interest in distant lands. At the same time, the Anglo-Saxon solidity, love of home and of the home-land, that devotion to the actual, the concrete, and the obvious, to the things man can see with his eyes, grasp with his hands and on which he can set his foot (what we call the English tendency to the "practical"), and the steady, stubborn, unyielding valor against all odds and even in the face of defeat and disaster,—these Anglo-Saxon qualities remained. The history of England ever since has been of the struggle of

these two types, alternately dominating English civilization, politics, and war. It is not by accident but by a deep, inherent necessity that two great parties of Liberals and Conservatives, under whatever various names, have divided and alternately controlled the kingdom and the empire. As now one and now the other of these antagonistic tendencies has prevailed, as one has disarranged, hampered or restricted the other, the many sided English people have somehow, to use their own homely phrase, "muddled through," often to a success that has amazed even themselves. Turn where we will in English history or language, we can not get away from the mingling of races that has modified all.

The English language, as it exists to-day, has written all over it the historic story. To quote Freeman again:\*

"The changes in language which followed the Norman Conquest were . . . of two kinds. There is the great influx of foreign words into our vocabulary, and there is the loss of inflexions and the general breaking up of grammatical forms. . . . The change in grammar has its parallel in other Teutonic languages; the change in vocabulary, in anything like the degree in which it took place in English, is peculiar to our own tongue. *It is the direct result of what happened in Britain, and did not happen elsewhere;* namely, the conquest of a Teutonic people by Romance-speaking conquerors.

"For three hundred years English ceased to be a literary and courtly language. . . . English had become a vulgar tongue, the tongue which was the daily speech only of

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\* "History of the Norman Conquest," vol. V, ch. 25, p. 514.

the less cultivated classes. The tongue of learning was Latin; the tongue of polite intercourse was French."

How, then, did English ever rise again? There are, first, to be considered the pliancy and adaptability, the "imitative quality," of the Normans, which had led them to adopt the French language in Normandy. There was more in the steady rise of the English people, after the death of the Conqueror, to power in the State, in government and war. What was true of the position of the English speech in one generation would be less true in the next and the next. When a Saxon princess came to the throne as the bride of Henry I, the Conqueror's son, when Norman kings had again and again to depend on the loyalty of their English subjects to defend them against their own barons or against claimants from beyond the sea, the speech of the English people thus rising in importance could not be wholly neglected or despised. Finally, and probably most important of all, was the stubborn inflexibility of the native English race. They would not give up the English speech. The English yeomanry made up the substance of English armies. Agriculture, trade, and commerce were chiefly in their hands. To deal with them, to influence them, to command them, even to live with them, it was necessary for the government and courtly classes to learn their speech. As intermarriage became an increasing factor, the English mothers would persistently teach their children

English as the "mother-tongue." Nurses and servants in wealthy homes, the laborers on great estates, the workmen in all mechanic crafts, the tradesmen in all shops, would be chiefly English. Children and youth would grow up surrounded by the English speech. More and more the French language would come to seem courtly, indeed, but somewhat pedantic and foreign, a luxury rather than a necessity of life. It may be broadly stated that for three hundred years the Normans tried in vain to make Englishmen speak French, till at length they found it easier themselves to learn English.

At the same time the common people were constantly picking up isolated French words from the cultured classes, reshaping them into English form, and weaving them into their own speech. When, at length, Wyclif's Bible had popularized the English speech in written form and Chaucer's poetry had proved its literary power, the victory was won and English became the one language of England.

But English was now a language greatly modified, as English civilization had been modified by the Norman influence. The rejection of inflections, that had begun as the various Teutonic dialects coalesced in England before the Norman Conquest, had been rapidly accelerated as French and English were interwoven on the soil of England. The supply of a lack in English words from the French had opened the way to constant new derivations from the classic tongues of Greek and Latin, but always transformed

to the dominant English type. The foundation had been laid for the rich store of English synonyms that now enable our language to express so felicitously all varying shades of thought. The strength of the Anglo-Saxon had been retained, but its heaviness had been relieved by a considerable absorption of the mobility, vividness, and grace of the French. English is a composite but not an accidental language. It is not made up of words pitched together as they might be, as a mere medium of communication; but the selective power of mighty peoples, often unconscious, but always controlling, chose and correlated its various elements, to frame the speech which, through the five hundred years since the day of Chaucer and Wyclif, has built a wondrous literature and become the messenger of freedom and of a high and progressive civilization around the world.

Enthusiasts for the ancient speech greatly err when they refer to "the Anglo-Saxon-speaking peoples." Our language is vastly improved, ennobled and refined beyond anything that the Anglo-Saxons ever knew. The Normans introduced words of elegance, for rich dress and furniture, for fine horses and arms, for feasting, delicate rather than sumptuous, for stately and beautiful buildings, for the usages of courtesy and chivalry. Through their language they opened the way to a literature of grace and beauty previously unknown to the Anglo-Saxons. All Chaucer's early work was either in

translations from the French or under the influence of French models.

But this was by no means the Normans' greatest service. It was, indeed, much to awaken the Anglo-Saxons to possibilities of grace and beauty, such as their own rugged speech had never attained. But the supreme triumph of the Norman influence—at the time unintended and unperceived—was in implanting the idea that the deficiencies of the native English could be supplied from without; that the undeveloped people need not wait till their language grew to a higher type by the evolution of centuries, but that they could begin them, as they were to bring in many gems already set in the literature of another speech. If from the French, why not also from the Italian and the Latin? Why not from the Greek? That process once begun, the language and the people started on a path of limitless advance. The language was not forever to spin the web of its future, like the spider, out of its own bowels, but to gather from every field, far and wide, every treasure suited to its purposes, as the bird builds her nest. Thus the language and the people were saved from that too intensive culture that breeds in and in, that makes a language and a people incapable of seeing beyond the horizon of their own civilization, and leads them to consider everything, however uncouth or monstrous, as good, beautiful, and sacred, so long as it is their very own. Under the Norman influence began that wide catholicity of En-

glish appropriation which gathers the treasures of every tongue to enrich our own, so that the choice of words becomes a question not of origin but of effective expression.

**IV**

**ANGLO-SAXON TO ENGLISH SPEECH**



## IV

### ANGLO-SAXON TO ENGLISH SPEECH

THE English-speaking man who attempts to read one of the Anglo-Saxon poems with a literal translation feels at first that he is puzzling over an uncouth foreign tongue, until suddenly he says, "Why, this word is English, a little differently spelled;" or, "This word is English, with a little change of meaning," and soon he feels that he is dealing with far-off kindred. There is something homelike in the language that is not in Latin, Greek, or Italian, for instance. The scholar soon traces a multitude of points of contact. Modern English is the ancient English, transformed, but not superseded.

The earliest pictures of the Anglo-Saxon civilization are found in ancient poems or poetical fragments. Among these stands preeminent the poem of *Beowulf*, which has been termed "The Old English Epic." It seems to belong to the period preceding the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain, as it contains no mention of England or Britain, and lays its scenes in South Sweden and Denmark. The one manuscript containing the poem, now in the British Museum, is assigned by scholars to the tenth century,

and the composition of the poem is believed to date back to the eighth century. The poem contains 3,183 lines. All probably came to England in a series of lays transmitted from bard to bard, united at length by some master mind into a continuous work, yet introducing at intervals fragments of older lays not connected with the general movement of the poem. Touches of Christian thought, appearing at various points, are believed to have been inwrought in the later recension and not to have belonged to the original, which was probably wholly heathen.

The hero, Beowulf, was the nephew of Hygelac, a king of the Geatas, of south Sweden, and was in his youth a famed sea-rover and warrior. In his home in Sweden he heard that Heorot, the hall of Hrothgar, a king of Jutland or Denmark, was haunted by a monster named Grendel, half-human, half-fiend, the "moor mark-stepper," who beset the moors and the wilderness, and would come night after night to bear away whomsoever he might find asleep in the great hall, to be devoured by him in his ocean-cave. The young and mighty Beowulf, who has already done many deeds of prowess, and who has the strength of thirty men, resolves to set Hrothgar free from this curse. The poem opens abruptly, as a minstrel's song. We can imagine the bard striking some chords on his harp, while the audience waits expectant, when suddenly he bursts into song:

Hƿæt! þe Gár-Dena in geardagum  
þeód-cyninga þrym gefrunen,  
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.

This looks very forbidding, on account of three special Anglo-Saxon characters, which all occur in this one brief extract: þ (called *wen*)=w; þ (called *thorn*), and ð (called *edh*), each=th. There was undoubtedly an original distinction between þ and ð, the former indicating the sharp *th*, as in *thin*, the latter the flat *th*, as in *this*; but the two characters were so confused by later scribes that all distinction is lost, except that þ is more likely to occur at the beginning, and ð in the middle or at the end of words. Either can be represented in English by *th*, and both are frequently so given in the printing of Anglo-Saxon; they will be so given in any later extracts in this chapter. Yet it will be found that these strange characters can be learned in a few moments, so that in texts where they occur they are read without the slightest perplexity.

Next we become aware of the great number of obsolete words, compelling us to use the dictionary, and of a still more serious difficulty in the grammar. For the greatest difference between the Anglo-Saxon and the English is that the Anglo-Saxon was an *inflected* language, doing by change in the forms of words what the English does by prepositions, etc. Hence in any translation we are driven to insert prepositions in parentheses in order to fill out the

meaning. Let us now repeat the lines with the ancient characters transliterated, and a literal translation interlined:

|  |   |                     |
|--|---|---------------------|
| Hwæt! we   | Gár-Dena                                | in geardagum        |
| <i>What!</i> <i>we</i> ( <i>of the</i> )                               | <i>Spear-Danes</i>                      | <i>in yore-days</i> |
| theod-cyninga  | thrym gefrunen,                         |                     |
| ( <i>the</i> ) <i>people-kings</i>                                     | ( <i>the</i> ) <i>glory have heard,</i> |                     |
| hu tha æthelingas  | ellen fremedon,                         |                     |
| <i>how the</i> <i>princes</i> ( <i>their</i> ) <i>might put forth,</i> |   |                     |

Some translators render this “Hwæt” as “Lo!” or “Behold!” which disguises the vivid racial originality of the opening. “What!” as an exclamation, is as old as the language and is in use to-day.\*

“What! Canst thou not forbear me half an hour?”—  
SHAKESPEARE, “King Henry IV” Part II, act iv, sc. 4,  
l. 240.

In general it may be said that the most literal translation of the old poem is the best. Translators seem beset to dramatize and decorate the simple verses to make them like the English of later days. When we read that the “mariners” “with *alacrity*” climbed on the ship, or that the road or floor was “of *variegated* stone,” we know we are far from the Anglo-Saxon; when another tells us that the terrible sword-stroke “burst the *vertebrae*,” we have lost our way altogether. The Anglo-Saxon poet

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\* It will be observed that the word in the poem is *hwæt*, the *h* preceding the *w*, as we are taught to pronounce it in our word *what*. In all similar words the spelling was *hw* in early Anglo-Saxon, where *h* is always a strong aspirate. The spelling in *wh* is not found before Layamon in the thirteenth century.

knew nothing of the Latin *vertebræ*; when he said that the sword-blow *ban-hringas bræc*,” (the) bone-rings broke,” or “broke the bone-rings,” we can do no better than to render that literally, and let a note explain it. In fact, there is nothing so dramatic as the bald literalness of the Anglo-Saxon that brings the very scene before us. But, on the other hand, we are not more literal by using words that have become hopelessly obsolete. Thus some elegant renderings leave one with a feeling of bewilderment—a sense of a misty reproduction of something that we can almost understand. Where the Anglo-Saxon words are dead to us, we can only give the nearest equivalents in modern English, and are so most literal. Sometimes we can almost read the ancient language without translation, as in the following:

Him se yldesta andswarode,  
*Him the eldest answered,*  
werodes        wisa        word-hord  
*(of the) company (the) wise (one) (the) word-hoard*  
onleac.  
*unlocked.*

The word “*werodes*” is obsolete, but “*yldesta*” is near enough to “eldest”; and, though “*andswarode*” seems a strange way to spell “answered,” it soon comes to seem only a little odd. The word “*wisa*” is better rendered as the “wise” one, than by the Latin-French word, the “sage.” We can only define a “sage” as a preeminently “wise” man. To “un-

lock the word-hoard" is a very picturesque expression for speaking out one's thought.

The ordinary student who has not time or inclination for the study of Anglo-Saxon will find it most helpful to read a good Anglo-Saxon text with an English translation, either interlined or printed side by side with the original. So he will come to know something of the far-off origins of his mother-tongue.

Beowulf starts to the rescue with fourteen chosen comrades. Going down to the shore, they find their ship drawn up on the beach, and, stepping upon the prow, push off the "bound-wood" (the ship) into the waves.

"Then, most like a bird, the foam-necked ship (*flota*, the 'floater') wind-driven sailed over the deep waves of the sea till that, about one hour of the second day, the twisted-stemmed ship had sailed over, so that the seamen saw land, the sea-cliffs, the steep mountains shine, the wide headlands. Then was the ocean voyage at an end. Thence quickly up the Westerners stepped upon the plain; they tied the sea-wood (the ship); they let down their shirts of mail, their fighting-garb. They thanked God because the wave-ways were (had been) made easy to them."

Speedily a mounted warrior, the beach-warden, brandishing a mighty spear, rides up and challenges them; but, learning who they are, he allows them to pass, and points out the way to the high hall of Heorot. They advance along a "stone-laid way," their coats of mail, formed of steel-rings deftly in-

terwoven, "hand-locked," ringing upon them as they walked, while on each helmet shone the image of a boar, many-hued, fire-hardened, and adorned with gold, that kept the guard of life.

Reaching the hall, they set down their great shields, hard as flint, against the wall, and struck their spears of gray ash (apparently with the bark still on the shaft) into the ground, where they stood like a grove. To the challenge of the warrior who kept the door Beowulf replies by giving his name and demanding audience of the king, to whom alone he will make known his errand. He is soon admitted within the hall, where the king Hrothgar, with his wife and daughter, had seats on the dais across one end of the hall, while through the length of the hall stretched the long tables, carved and gilded, with long hearths for fire between them, and above them openings in the roof for the smoke. The tables were laden with boar's flesh and venison and cups for ale and mead. Beowulf tells his errand and is welcomed to the feast. A bench is cleared for him and his companions, "the sons of the Geatas," to "sit close together." There the stout-hearted ones went and sat. A thegn waited on them as they feasted, and between whiles a "scop" (bard: literally, a *shaper*) sang with clear voice in Heorot. There was the joy of warriors, a great gathering of Danes and Westerners.

"Then rose the laughter of heroes; music resounded; the talk was joyous. Wealtheow, Hrothgar's queen, came

forth. Mindful of the ties of kindred, the golden-wreathed lady greeted the men in the hall; passed among the old and the young; . . . until it befell that she, the neck-laced queen, bore the mead-cup to Beowulf. She greeted the lord of the Geatas, and thanked God, discreet in her words, that the desire of her heart had happened to her, that she might find any earl to trust for relief from troubles. He, the fierce warrior, received the cup from Wealtheow, and then, prepared for war, he spake; Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, said: 'I this thought when I set out on the deep, and trod my sea-boat's deck with my band of men, that I alone would work the will of your people, or would sink among the dead, fast in the foe's grasp; I shall perform an earl's valor, or in this mead-hall abide my death.' These words, the Geat's boast, liked the woman well. Gold-wreathed, the happy people's-queen, went to sit beside her lord."

Knowing the monster to be invulnerable to all weapons, Beowulf lies down in the great hall at night unarmed, to meet the foe with his naked hands.

"Grendel, the night-walker, came prowling in the gloom of night; from his eyes issued a hideous light, most like to fire."

In him we recognize the prototype of all the giants, ogres and goblins of old English folk-lore and nursery tales, reminiscences, doubtless, of ancient days when the remnants of the prehistoric men still lingered in desolate places around the settlements of their more civilized successors, upon whose homes they made raids from time to time in the night, when darkness and terror would magnify their size and strength, and imagination would

gather around them all elements of horror. Of this type were the old representations of the devil, as in Bunyan's *Apollyon*. Grendel comes to the great hall and crashing in the door, seizes one of Beowulf's sleeping companions:

"He tore him irresistibly, drank the blood from his veins, and swallowed him by great mouthfuls till he had devoured all but his hands and feet."

Then Beowulf seized upon the monster with an unyielding grip. In the contest "the gilded seats were overthrown," the great hall rocked and would have fallen but that it was "made fast with iron bands." At length Beowulf, by main force, wrenches off the arm of the fiend, who flees to his sea-cave to die. The king and the queen, with a b̄evy of maidens, come in the morning rejoicing greatly to see the gory arm—a ghastly trophy—hung up over the dais. A great feast is held and sagas sung.

But Grendel's mother, a death-spirit of the furious sea, comes the next night in Beowulf's absence to avenge her son, and destroys a warrior, Hrothgar's dearest friend, his "shoulder-to-shoulder man in war."

Beowulf returning finds the king plunged in hopeless gloom, and learns the sad story. Then the young hero becomes the counselor of the aged king.

"Beowulf spake, the son of Ecgtheow: 'Grieve not, thou wise man! Better it is for every one that he should avenge his friend than that he should mourn exceedingly. Each one of us must abide the end of worldly life. Let

him who may, execute justice before his death; that will afterwards be best for the warrior when he no longer lives. . . . This day have thou patience of every loss, as I expect from thee.'"

Then the hero, with his little band, starts out to do the thing of which he has spoken—to "avenge his friend." He tracks the monster to her lair, well known and dreaded by all the people of the country-side. He reaches the dread gulf, whose waters are encompassed by dark trees and wolf-haunted slopes, and where, from time to time, may be seen the "wonder" of fire burning under the flood. Leaving his comrades, Beowulf plunges into the black waters, sinks far down into the depths, and is then borne up into the cave under the sea, where alone he fights with the fiend. His sword is broken; he is hurled back upon the sand; then, in the instant of imminent death, he catches sight of a golden-hilted sword of the giants hanging above him on the wall. Springing to his feet, he seizes this and strikes so true a blow that the demon foe falls dead at his feet. Spying the corpse of Grendel lying near, he cuts off his head, and, bearing the head in one hand and still grasping in the other the golden hilt of the great sword, he swims back through the blood-stained water to his thegns, who have given him up for dead, but still watch loyally upon the bank. The head of Grendel requires the strength of four men to carry it to the great hall; but of the sword the hilt alone is left, the blade having melted in the

poisonous blood of the demon, "just like ice when the Father looseneth the bands of frost." With feasts and splendid gifts, Beowulf is sent home to Sweden victorious. Notable is the quality of Hrothgar's presents to the victor, "a mighty-valued sword," a crested helmet, and eight splendidly caparisoned horses,—a warrior's gifts.

Soon a new section of the poem begins. Sixty years later, when Beowulf had himself become king and had ruled fifty years, a fire-breathing dragon starts out to desolate his own land. The gray-headed king, with all the courage of his youth, goes forth to deliver his people. When he reaches the deep, dragon-haunted dell, he sits down and sings his death-song,—all the deeds of his life since he was seven years old. That ended, he advances down the dell, and there, with his back to the rock, and with but one thegn, Wiglaf, who has dared stand by him, he fights a desperate battle with the dragon, called in the old poem "the Worm," a snake-like monster fifty feet in length. Beowulf has received a deadly wound, but still fights on until, at last, by one good blow with his failing strength, he cuts the monster in twain.

Then, finding that the venom of the Worm burned in his veins, and seeing death drawing near, he bids the faithful Wiglaf to hasten and bring out the treasure, gold and gems and a wondrous golden standard, from the dragon's den. Looking upon the trophies, he exclaims,

"I thank the glorious king that, ere I die, I have won these things for my people, have paid my old life for them. But thou supply the need of my folk. I may no longer be here."

The power of the poem is that it presents vividly what in the sixth to the seventh century after Christ were the customs and ideals of the people from whom the English are descended. The original lays seem to be of Scandinavian origin, but the completed poem was made by some English poet on English soil, and, whether with or without direct intent, so molded as to express the English ideals, and to some degree the English customs, of the writer's own day.

The civilization depicted, though barbaric, was civilization. The people of the day had their great halls, built strongly of wood, braced and strengthened by iron, and arranged for what to them was splendid, and was surely sumptuous, feasting. They had their laws of hospitality, free and generous. Gradations of rank were marked by position at the table. Noble women had seats of honor on the dais. The queen passes the cup to the honored guest, receives his promise to slay the dragon, and honors him with her gracious approval. Later king and queen join in rejoicing and in congratulating the hero upon his victory. Yet the barbaric touch appears in the fact that the arm torn from the monster, with its stains of blood and its horrible claws, is hung cheerfully over the dais to gladden

the triumphal feast. Gold and gems and costly armor, whencesoever obtained, are familiar objects. The home-life of the people is shown not only in the great royal hall but in the dwellings clustered around it, "each with its garden." Sympathy with the sea in all its moods of brightness, gloom, or storm, pervades the poem. All its action is on or near the ocean.

But beyond all these particulars is the lofty type of heroism displayed. The hero goes forth not for plunder, not, like the knights errant of chivalry, for mere "adventure." One writer has called Beowulf a "soldier of fortune." Never was designation more inappropriate. He is seeking no prizes or rewards of valor, but all the splendid gifts bestowed upon him he gives with princely generosity to his king and queen on reaching his home-land. Nor does he fight only in defense of home and country. His own land was not invaded, his own people not in danger. It is the hearing of unavenged wrong across the sea that calls him forth from his home, and his native shore, to deliver sufferers to whom he is unknown. He takes full measure of the peril he is to meet, and lies down in the dark night in the demon-haunted hall to wait with bare hands the coming of the grisly foe whom steel can not touch. Similar is the calm courage with which he afterwards leaves his armed comrades on the rocks, and dives into the black water to meet all alone the death-demon in the ocean cave. To the daunt-

less resolution is joined the swift resourcefulness with which the fallen hero, when smitten down with broken sword, springs up from the sand, sees and snatches from the wall the giant's sword, so conquering when all had seemed lost. Not less grand is the self-devotion of the aged king, not weakened by any idleness, luxury or vice during his fifty years of royal rule, going forth for his people to what he plainly feels may be his last battle. We see here the premonition of England's "grand old men," like Palmerston, Gladstone, and many another, who served their country to their latest breath, and scarcely knew the meaning of "declining years."

When the last dread battle has been fought and won, and the victor, mortally stricken, lies facing death, there is the calm recital of his life-endeavor and life-achievement. Of the scenery of this and kindred poems it is remarked:

"Landscape painting in the Anglo-Saxon poems is adapted to men of this stamp. Their souls delight in the bleak boreal climes; the north wind, frost, hail, howling tempests, and raging seas recur as often in this literature as blue waves and sunlit blossoms in the writings of men to whom those exquisite marvels are familiar. The descriptions are all short, save when they refer to ice or snow or the song of the sea. The Anglo-Saxon poets dwell on such sights complacently; their tongue is then unloosed."

—JUSSERAND, "*A Literary History of the English People*," vol. i, p. 55.

Scholars dwell with delight on the poems ascribed

to Cædmon, who died in 680, and who was said to have been taught the art of song by a heavenly vision, and whose paraphrase of Genesis and Exodus, with the story of the Rebellion of the Angels and the Fall of Man, has led many to call him the precursor of Milton; on the poems of Cynewulf (750-825), the roistering minstrel at the courts of nobles in his youth, and, after his thrilling conversion to Christianity, the author of numerous poems of power and beauty. These poems and many spirited fragments of song of the Anglo-Saxon period can not now be read by the English-speaking man without thorough study of the Anglo-Saxon grammar and dictionary. But they are well worth reading, if only in English translations.\*

The meter of the poems depended not upon the rime (which was only introduced from the French after the Norman Conquest), but upon accent and alliteration. Accent is still the determining element in English poetry, since we have lost the "quantity" of the Greek and Latin and some modern languages, in which a "long" vowel actually occupies more time in utterance than a "short" vowel. Alliteration, the beginning of several successive words with the same consonant or vowel, is well illustrated in the well-known line,

"Up a high hill he heaved a huge round stone."  
Alliteration appears now but sparingly in English

\* Among the best brief reviews of this ancient literature is Brooke's "History of English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest."

poetry, but was an essential element of Anglo-Saxon verse.

"The metre of the Anglo-Saxon poems is . . . unlike any modern metre without rhyme, and without any fixed number of syllables. Its essential elements were accent and alliteration. Each verse was divided into two half-verses by a pause, and has four accented syllables, while the number of unaccented syllables is indifferent. The two accented syllables of the first half, and one of the accented syllables in the second half, begin with the same consonant, or with vowels which were generally different from one another. This is the normal rule; but to give a greater freedom there is often only one alliterative letter in the first half-verse. . . . The emphatic words in which the chief thought lay were accented and alliterated, and probably received an additional force by the beat of the hand upon the harp. All the poetry was sung, and the poet could alter as he sung the movement of the verse. But, however the metre was varied, it was not varied arbitrarily. It followed clear rules, and all its developments were built on the simple original type of four accents and three alliterated syllables."

—STOPFORD A. BROOKE, "*English Literature*," ch. I, p. 4.

The following line from the poem of Beowulf illustrates the meter:

Flood under foldan—nis thaet feor heonon.  
Flood under field—not is that far hence.

A person who can not understand one of these poems except with a translation can often follow the alliteration and accent, and catch what has been called the "marching music" of this ancient verse.

Anglo-Saxon prose seems to have begun somewhat late. The devout and learned Bæda, "the Venerable Bede" (673-735), who spent his quiet life in the monastery of Jarrow teaching six hundred pupils, not only Englishmen, but pilgrims from all parts of Europe, wrote chiefly in Latin, though he devoted his last days, and almost his last hour, to a translation of the Gospel of John into the English tongue. This work has unfortunately been lost. He wrote in Latin the "Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation," which King Alfred, long afterward, translated into the English of his day.

The native English prose begins with King Alfred (849-901).

"Alfred changed the whole front of our literature. Before him England possessed in her own tongue one great poem and a train of ballads and battle-songs. Prose she had none. The mighty roll of the prose books that fill her libraries begins with the translations of Alfred, and above all with the chronicle of his reign."

—GREEN, "*History of the English People*," vol. I, bk. i, ch. 3, p. 107.

In ways that we can not trace there had arisen a simple prose style, probably that of common speech, improved by the selective use of the scholarly king. Alfred was easily the foremost writer of his rude age; and every great writer, while he must use the language of the people whom he addresses in order to be understood by them, at the same time molds the speech he uses by the influence of his own per-

sonality. He chooses now a word smoother in sound, again one more vigorous or delicate in meaning, then one more lofty in import or more familiar in use, as the case may require. In the construction of clauses or sentences he chooses that arrangement of words which seems to him most clear, felicitous and euphonious, or most vigorous and effective.

Alfred translated from the Latin into the "Englisc" of his day, or the Anglo-Saxon, the "Consolation of Philosophy" (*De Consolacione Philosophiae*) of Boethius, the "Pastoral" of Pope Gregory, the "Universal History" of Orosius, and Bæda's "Ecclesiastical History" of England. Often in the midst of his translations he would enter matter of his own—an account of new discoveries in the North, his own theories of government, or most devout reflections on the majesty and goodness of God.

The language used by Alfred and his contemporaries was by them definitely called *Englisc*,—English. It is so true to the modern type that, with some help from a glossary, it may be read without much difficulty by the English-speaking man of the present day. This may be shown by the following extract\* from Alfred's record of the explorations of a traveler named Ohther along the coasts of the White Sea, where dwelt a people called the Beormas:

\* With interlinear translation as given by Marsh, "Origin and History of the English Language," lect. iii, pp. 125-126.

Fela spellā\* him sædon tha Beormas, ægther ge  
*Many tales him said (told) the Beormas, both*

of hyra agenum lande, ge of thaem lande  
*of their own land, and of the lands*

the ymb hy utan wæron; ac he nyste hwæt  
*that around them about were; but he wist-not what*  
 thæs sothes wær, forthæm he hit sylf ne geseah.  
*(of) the sooth was, for-that he it self not saw.*

Tha Finnas him thuhte, and tha Beormas spræcon  
*The Finns him thought, and the Beormas spoke*

neah an getheode. Swithost he for thyder,  
*nigh one language. Chiefliest he fared thither,*

to-eacan thæs landes sceawunge, for thæm  
*besides the land's seeing, for the*

hors-hwælum,† forthæm hi habbath swythe æthele ban  
*horse-whales, for-that they have very noble bones*

on  
 in

hyra tothum; tha teth hy brohton sume  
*their teeth; these teeth they brought some*

thæmi cyninge; and hyra hyd bith swythe god to  
*(to) the king; and their hide is very good for*  
 scip-rapum.  
*ship-ropes.*

The English or Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, begun in Alfred's time, and probably under his personal superintendence, extends from the year 891 to 1154. Of this the most conflicting views have been held by different writers. Milton says:

\* We still speak of the magician's *spell*, and we have the word compounded in "gospel," which is the Anglo-Saxon god+*spel*, the "good story."

† Walruses.

"Such things what were they more worthy to record than the ward of kites and crows, flocking and fighting in the air?"

Marsh, in his "Origin and History of the English Language," writes:

"The Saxon Chronicle is a dry chronological record, noting in the same lifeless tone important and trifling events, without the slightest tinge of dramatic color, of criticism in weighing evidence, or of judgment in the selection of the facts narrated. . . . I know not where else to find a series of annals which is so barren of all human interest, and for all purposes of real history so worthless."\*

On the other hand, Green, in his "History of the English People," remarks :†

"It seems likely that the King's (Alfred's) rendering of Bæda's history gave the first impulse toward the compilation of what is known as the English or Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which was certainly thrown into its present form during his reign. The meager lists of the kings of Wessex and the bishops of Winchester, which had been preserved from older times, were roughly expanded into a national history by insertions from Bæda; but it is when it reaches the reign of Alfred that the Chronicle suddenly widens into the vigorous narrative, full of life and originality, that marks the gift of a new power to the English tongue. Varying as it does from age to age in historic value, it remains the first vernacular history of any Teutonic people, and, save for the Gothic translation of the Ulfilas, the earliest and most venerable monument of Teutonic prose."

A description of the way in which the Chronicle was written shows how these conflicting views be-

\* Lect. iii, p. 103.

† Bk. i, ch. 3, p. 107.

came possible. A marginal space on the left of the page was ruled off by a perpendicular line. Horizontal lines divided the page into sections, and in the upper left-hand corner of each rectangle the number of a year was written. Then the scribe would record anything he saw fit to chronicle. As people depended for the most part upon memory for particulars, only some striking event, as the death of a king, a storm, or a comet would have its date fixed. Memory would supply the rest, as long as people cared to remember. Jusserand says:\*

"He (the chronicler) writes as a recorder, chary of words. The reader's feelings will be moved by the deeds registered, not by the words used. Of kings the chronicler will often say, 'he was killed,' without any observation: 'And King Osric was killed . . . And King Selric was killed. . . .' Why say more? It was an everyday occurrence, and had nothing curious about it. But a comet is not seen every day; a comet is worth describing; '678.—In this year the star (called) comet appeared in August, and shone for three months every morning like sunbeam. And bishop Wilfrith was driven from his bishopric by King Ecgferth.' We are far from the art of Gibbon or Carlyle. Few monuments, however, are more precious than those old annals; for no people in Europe can pride itself on having chronicles so ancient written in its national language."

Since the writing of the Chronicle extended over more than two and a half centuries, it mirrors quite faithfully the changes in the written language within that time, and the later portions can be somewhat

\* "A Literary History of the English People from the Origins to the Renaissance," bk. i, ch. 5, p. 87.

easily read by the modern English-speaking man by the aid of a glossary.

The long struggle against the "Danes," or Northmen, within England and without, lasting from Alfred's day to the very year of the Norman invasion, gave little opportunity for literature, and the disturbed conditions following the Norman Conquest were not more favorable.

The poem entitled the "Brut" (Brutus), a metrical Chronicle of Britain, by Layamon, is assigned to about the year 1200. It contains somewhat more than 32,000 lines. The poem exists in two manuscripts, of which the earlier appears to belong to the early part of the thirteenth century (not far from 1200 A. D.) and is believed to be identical with the original work, except for occasional omission of lines by the copyist, leaving some break in the sense. The other manuscript, believed to be about half a century later, makes many changes of the original words for later forms, and sometimes omits many lines, evidently by design, as the taste of the copyist led him to choose. In the 57,000 verses of the two texts, less than one hundred Latin or Norman words have been found; in the 32,000 lines of older manuscript less than fifty. Yet Layamon wrote almost a century and a half after the Norman Conquest,—a fact showing how very slow the mass of the people were to adopt, even in part, the language of their conquerors. French and English subsisted side by side, French as the language

of the nobility and gentry, of the civil officers and the courts of law, Anglo-Saxon English as the language of the common people. At the same time Latin remained, as it did for centuries after, the distinctive language of the learned. Layamon uses chiefly the Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, but often intermingles riming lines in the French style, in this way showing that the French influence was affecting his versification, though not his diction.

He adopts from the French chronicler, Wace, an ancient legend that Brutus, the great-grandson of Æneas, was the founder of the English race. Hence he begins his narrative with the siege of Troy. He treats as English all who ever lived in England, celebrating the exploits of the British kings Cadwallader, Uther, and Arthur as cheerfully as those of their Anglo-Saxon conquerors. In his language many of the old Anglo-Saxon inflections are retained, but the syntax of his poems so nearly approaches that of modern English that, as Marsh observes, "no previous grammatical study is required to read it."

The Anglo-Saxon inflections are beginning to disappear, and more rapidly in the later of the two texts; the preposition *of*, for instance, is used with the genitive, or with the stem-form of the noun in place of the genitive; also, the modern English plural in *s* has become frequent. The transformation of the Anglo-Saxon *hw* to the modern English *wh* in such words as *what*, etc., appears for the first time in

Layamon. Another important novelty of his style is the use of the auxiliaries *shall* and *will* precisely as in modern English.

A fairly good idea of his verse may be obtained from his description of the birth of King Arthur, as given in the following lines:

The time com the wes icoren:  
*The time came that was chosen:*  
 tha wes Arthur iboren.  
*then was Arthur born.*

Sone swa he com an eorthe,  
*(So) soon as he came on earth,*  
 aluen\* hine iuengen,  
*elves him received,*  
 heo bigolen that child  
*they enchanted that child*  
 mid galdere swithe stronge.  
*with magic most strong.*

heo yeuen him mihte  
*they gave him might*  
 to beon bezst alre cnihten;  
*to be best (of) all knights;*

heo yeuen him an other thing,  
*they gave him another thing,*  
 that he scolde beon riche king;  
*that he should be (a) rich king;*

heo yiuent him that thridde,  
*they gave him that third,*  
 that he scolde longe libben.  
*that he should long live.*

\* An instance of the indiscriminate use of *u* and *v*, as also in later lines, as *yeuen* for *yeven*, etc.; reading this word *aluen* it is not so very unlike *elves*.

† This is a variant form of *yeuen* that occurs frequently in Layamon.

heo yifen\* him, that kine-bern,  
*they gave him, that child,*  
 custen swithe gode,  
*gifts most good,*  
 that he wes mete-custi  
*that he was (most) generous*  
 of alle quikemonnen.  
*of all living† men.*  
 this the alue him yef,  
*this the elves him gave,*  
 and al swa that cild ithae.  
*and all so that child thrived.*

The poem called the "Ormulum" is almost exactly contemporary with Layamon's "Brut," dating not far from 1200 A. D. It was written by an English Augustinian monk, Orm or Ormin, who says in his opening lines :

Thiss boc iss nemmned Orrmulum  
 Forrthi thatt Orrm itt wrohhte.

The book is interesting for its peculiar system of spelling, every consonant being doubled after a short vowel, as may be shown by italicizing the doubled consonants in the lines above quoted. Thus :

Thiss boc iss nemnnedd Orrmulum  
 Forrthi thatt Orrm itt wrohhte.

*This, is, it, and that*, for instance, and the author's own name, *Orm*, were spelled in his day as now, but he doubled the consonant in each case to show

\* This is a variant form of *yesen* that occurs frequently in Layamon.  
 † Quick in the sense of "living" is familiar in Scriptural use: "the Judge of quick and dead."

that the preceding vowel was short. On the contrary, *boc*, with but one final consonant, had the vowel long, and was pronounced *bōc*. To this system of spelling Orm attached the greatest importance, observing it carefully throughout the book and enjoining its observance upon all who should ever copy it. Thus we see that a reform of English spelling was instituted at least seven hundred years ago. But spelling-reform seems to have been no more popular then than in the centuries since, for there is no evidence that the poem was ever copied at all, only one manuscript being known to be in existence. Evidently the English people did not take kindly to the idea of spelling *iss* and *itt*, and overloading with other superfluous consonants. This manuscript contains twenty thousand verses, apparently but a small part of the original poem. The Anglo-Saxon alliteration has disappeared, but the Norman-French rime has not been adopted, the meter thus forming a kind of blank verse. Very few words of Norman-French origin are used, while some of the Anglo-Saxon words are now obsolete; but on the whole the diction is very clear to the modern English reader. The syntax and order of words are so near present usage as to be readily followed. One striking peculiarity is that the "Ormulum" is the first work to use the Scandinavian form *aren* (are) as the present indicative plural of the verb *beon*, be. This form, then rare, has now come into universal use. The "Ormulum" is a

paraphrase of Scripture, possessing no special literary merit as a poem, but interesting as marking one step in the transformation of Anglo-Saxon into modern English. The following extract will show the style of the poem:

Aftterr thatt tatt te Laferrd Crist  
*After that that the Lord Christ*

Wass cumenn off Egyppte  
*Was come from Egypt*

Inntill the land off Galileo,  
*Into the land of Galilee,*

Till Nazaræthess chesstre \*  
*To Nazareth's town,*

Thæraffterr sayyth the Godspellboc  
*Thereafter saith the Gospelbook*

Bilaef he thaer well lannge  
*Remained he there well long*

Withth hise frend† tatt haffdenn himm  
*With his friends that had him*

To yemenn & to gætenn,  
*To keep and to protect,*

Withth Marye thatt hiss moderr wass  
*With Mary that his mother was*

& mayydenn thwerrt ut clene,  
*And maiden throughout clean,*

& withth Josæp thatt was himm sett  
*And with Joseph that was him set*

To fedenn & to fosstrenn.  
*To feed and to foster.*

\* *Chestre*, "town," is from the Latin *castra*, "camp"; somewhat changed in form it became the ending of many proper names: as, *Dorchester*, *Leicester*, etc.

† The sign of the plural of *frend* is omitted, perhaps by error of the copyist.

The whole of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth were for various reasons unfavorable to literary production. One official document stands out as very notable.

The Proclamation of Henry III in the year 1258 is regarded by many philologists as "the first specimen of English as contradistinguished from Semi-Saxon."\* The exact date of this document is positively known, while the dates of Layamon, the "Ormulum," etc., are more or less conjectural. The proclamation is very short, containing (besides proper names) only about three hundred words in all. The document is evidently a specimen of the English generally used and popularly understood at that date, so that it could be sent "into every shire of England and Ireland."

The text of a portion of the proclamation, with a literal interlinear translation, is as follows:

Henr', thurgh Godes fultume King on Engleneloande,  
*Henry, through God's grace King on England,*  
 lhoaverdd on Irloand, duk' on Norm', on Aquitain',  
*lord on Ireland, duke on Normandy, on Aquitaine,*  
 and eorl on Aniow, send igretinge to all hise halde,  
*and earl on Anjou, sends greetings to all his lieges,*  
 ilaerde and ilaewede on Huntendon' schir'.  
*clerical and lay on Huntingdonshire.*

Thaet witen ge wel alle, thaet we willen and unnen  
*That know ye well all, that we will and grant*  
*(This)*

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\* Marsh, "Origin and History of the English Language," lect. v, p. 191.

thaet thaet ure raedesmen, alle other the moare dael of  
*that that our councilors, all or the more part of*  
*(what)*

heom, thaet beoth ichosen thurgh us and thurg thaet  
*them,\* that are chosen through us and through that*  
*(who)*

loandes folk on ure kuneriche, habbeth idon and shullen  
*land's folk on our kingdom, have done and shall*  
don in the worthnesse of Gode and on ure treowthe for  
*do in the worthiness of God and on our truth for*  
the freme of the loande thurg the besigte of than  
*the good of the land through the ordinance of the*  
toforeniseide redesmen beo stedfaest and ilestinde in  
*aforesaid councilors be stedfast and lasting in*  
alle thinge a buten aende, . . . . and for thaet we willen,  
*all things without end, . . . . and for that we will,*  
*(because)*

thaet this beo stedfaest and lestinde, we senden gew  
*that this be stedfast and lasting, we send you*  
this writ open iseined with ure seal to halden amanges  
*this writ open\* sealed with our seal to hold among*  
gew ine hord. . . .  
*you in hoard. . . .*

And al on tho ilche worden is isend in to æurihce  
*And all on the same words is sent into every*  
othre shcire ouer al thaer kuneriche on Engleneloande  
*other shire over all their kingdom on England*  
and ek in tel Irelonde.  
*and also into Ireland.*

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\* It is worth remarking how distinctively English are certain of these expressions, as "the more part of them," instead of "the majority"; and "writ open (open writ), and how much more expressive this is than the later "letters patent."

Here two points are to be especially observed:

1. The language of the proclamation, as regards the words it contains—its vocabulary—is the older English, with scarcely a touch of Norman influence. The Latin-Norman word “duke,” for instance, is given among the king’s titles, as a necessary official designation; but the proclamation does not speak of “councilors,” but of “redesmen” or “raedesmen,” for we may notice here, as often elsewhere, the different spellings of the same word in the same document. Many words now obsolete appear for which we must turn to an Anglo-Saxon dictionary; as, *fultume*, the Anglo-Saxon word for “help”—“Henr’, thurgh God’s *fultume*, King,” etc.—where a modern royal proclamation would read, “Henry, by the *grace* of God, King,” etc.

A number of the words are strange in appearance merely by the use of *i* or *y* as a participial prefix (representing the Anglo-Saxon participial prefix *ge-*) ; as, (*i*)*chosen*, (*i*)*don*, (*i*)*lestinde*, etc. When we once observe this, we recognize *ichosen* as *chosen*, *idon* as *done*,—familiar forms; while *isend* is easily seen to be *sent*, and *ilestinde* is not so very far from *lasting*. Notice must also be taken of the indiscriminate use of *u* for *v*; as in “*aeriche*,” “*aeveriche*,” “every”; “*ouer*,” “over,” etc. We observe, also, that the proclamation frequently uses (with perfect correctness) the relative pronoun *that* where modern English would prefer *who* or *which*.

2. The construction of sentences is no longer

Anglo-Saxon. The connection of words in this document depends not upon case-endings or other changes of form, but solely upon position. This is a feature distinctively English. Thus, prepositions are used instead of case-endings to denote the relations of nouns. The usage is somewhat different from the present; as, "King *on* Engleloand," etc., where we should write "King *of* England," etc. Still, the principle of connection by prepositions has become a controlling factor, involving a definite position of the words in the sentence, to make the sense clear. Hence, the order of the words is very nearly what it would be in modern English.

"The first thing that strikes us in the aspect of this proclamation is a structure of period so nearly corresponding with present usage, that, as the above translation shows, it is easy to make a modern English version, conforming to the original in verbal arrangement and syntax, and yet departing very little from the idiom of our own time. *The positional syntax had become established;* and the inflectional endings had no longer a real value. True, from the force of habit, they continued long in use; . . . . but when it was once distinctly felt that *the syntactical relations of words had come to depend on precedence and sequence,* the cases and other now useless grammatical signs were neglected, confounded, and finally dropped. . . . .

"The principle that *the grammatical categories of the words in a period are determined by their relative positions is the true characteristic of English as distinguished from Saxon.*"

—MARSH, "*Origin and History of the English Language,*"  
lect. v, p. 19.  
<sup>8</sup>

This proclamation of Henry III, in 1258, is one of the standard monuments of our language, and marks the watershed between Anglo-Saxon and English.

As to the official use of English, it is interesting in this connection to note its steady advance. After the Norman Conquest, the oath of the king was regularly pronounced in Latin; but at the beginning of the fourteenth century a note was added to the Latin form of the oath, providing that "if the king was illiterate he was to take the oath in French." Henry II thus took the coronation oath in French in 1307. But in 1399 the act of abdication of Richard II was read first in Latin, then in English. Henry of Lancaster then made his claim to the crown in English:

"In the name of Fadir, Son, and Holy Ghost, I, Henry of Lancaster, challenge yis (this) Reume (Realm) of England."

When his claim was allowed, he rendered thanks in English,

"to God and yowe Spiritual and Temporal and all the Astates of the land."

In the courts either French or Latin long continued to be the official language, though about this period the idiom used "shows that judges and advocates delivered in French what they had thought in English." In the year 1300 a regulation in force at Oxford allowed people who had to speak in a

suit "to express themselves in any language generally understood."\* At length, in 1352, a statute ordains that henceforward all pleas shall be made in English, and enrolled in Latin, and that in English law courts "the French language, which is too unknown in the said realm, shall be discontinued."

The rising power of the third estate, the Commons, in Parliament, signally manifested when they formally joined in the deposition of Richard II and the placing of Henry IV upon the throne, gave official recognition to English as the language of the common people until, "in 1363, the Chancellor opened the session of Parliament by a speech in English, the first ever heard in Westminster."†

Scholars find in the latter part of the thirteenth and the opening of the fourteenth century many interesting productions and fragments showing the general progress of the language, but otherwise of little importance. The "Chronicle of England," by Robert of Gloucester, who flourished about the year 1300, begins—like that of Layamon—with the siege of Troy, and extends to the death of Henry III, in 1372, but has not Layamon's poetical merit. Its opening lines prove Robert to have had the sturdy patriotism of the typical Englishman:

"Engelond ys a wel god lond, ich wene of eche lond best,  
Y set in the ende of the world, as al in the West.  
The see goth hym al a boute, he stont as an yle."‡

\* Jusserand, "*Literary History of the English People*," vol. i, p. 239.

† *Ibid.*, p. 242.

‡ It is interesting to observe that this poet refers to "Engelond," or the "lond" by *he* or *him*, where we should use "it," or in personification, "she" or "her."

In his writings nearly two hundred and fifty years after the Norman Conquest, the proportion of Norman-French words does not exceed four or five per cent, though some of these appear for the first time in his works. Despite the scholarly interest in these and other works and fragments, it may almost be said that there is no English literature from the time of Layamon and Orm (about 1200 A. D.) to the time of Chaucer—a period of one hundred and fifty years. Writing there was—enough of it, such as it was—sufficing to keep the English pen in play, though not especially to exalt the mind. That is, the language was progressing, though literature was not. There was matter for the people to read, to keep the popular intellect awake, and to record the insensible changes of the language. In his article "English Literature" in the "Encyclopedia Britannica," Dr. Henry Bradley says:

"The extent and character of the literature produced during the first half of the 14th century (1300-1350) indicate that the literary use of the native tongue was no longer, as in the preceding age, a mere condescension to the needs of the common people. The rapid disuse of French as the ordinary medium of intercourse among the middle and higher ranks of society, and the consequent substitution of English for French as the vehicle of school instruction, created a widespread demand for vernacular reading. The literature which arose in answer to this demand, though it consisted mainly of translations or adaptations of foreign words, yet served to develop the appreciation of poetic beauty, and to prepare an audience in the near future for a poetry in which the genuine thought and feeling of the nation were to find expression."

**V**

**CHAUCERIAN ENGLISH**

**Contemporaries of Chaucer**



## V

### CHAUCERIAN ENGLISH

#### Contemporaries of Chaucer

ENGLAND had been engaged in conflict at home and wars abroad. Especially had the French wars of the reign of Edward III brought glory to the English arms and had united Norman noble and Saxon yeoman as never before. A historian remarks of the English victory over the French at Crecy:

"It was a victory of foot soldiers over horse soldiers—of a nation in which all ranks stood heartily together over one in which all ranks except that of the gentry were despised."

—*GARDINER, "A Student's History of England,"* vol. I, ch. 15, p. 242.

But these wars, however gratifying to the national pride, had sadly wasted the lives of Englishmen. The Great Plague, known as the "Black Death," had swept away half the population of the British Isles. With the scarcity of laborers, prices of labor had risen, which oppressive enactments strove in vain to stay. All this had produced that wide industrial unrest soon to culminate in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Such conditions stimulate popular thought and inquiry as to the foundations of right

and wrong, of social and industrial relations, the relations of the individual with church and government, and such arousal of thought is sure to produce some vigorous literature.

So, in the latter half of the fourteenth century, a cycle of eminent writers appeared, as in all ages great authors have appeared, not as lonely stars, but in constellations of literature, the same political and social conditions stimulating many minds at once, bringing leaders to the front and preparing for them a constituency of eager readers, while each leader rouses others to emulous activity, perhaps in very different lines, but all under the influence of the one pervading impulse.

Thus in one half-century appeared Langland (1330-1400), Chaucer (1340-1400), Gower (1330-1408), and Wyclif (1334-1384). These dates are in some cases conjectural, but are known not to vary far from the real, thus bringing the mature life of these leaders within the period of half a century (1350 to 1400), while their literary activity falls for the most part within a single generation.

"Piers Plowman" is the name commonly given to an allegorical poem, more fully entitled "The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman." The reputed author, William Langland, or Langlande, is portrayed in the work itself as a tall, thin man, often called "Long Will," wandering solitary among the crowds of London, ill-clad in a long dark robe, as he was very poor, yet too proud to

make the customary deferential salutations to lords and ladies. He had studied for the church, and so had the shaven crown of priest or monk, but had received no preferment, for which the fact that he was married would in that age have disqualified him, and earned a precarious living as a hired singer in the churches and by performing humble clerical work in law offices.

It is true that the very existence of such an author is now disputed by some critics, though such eminent authorities as Skeat and Jusserand incline to accept the description as genuine, and to the uncritical reader the man described is the very man to have written the poem. But, fortunately, nothing depends upon the identification. Be the author known or unknown, there stands the poem, preserving for us one type of English speech as widely used and readily understood in the latter part of the fourteenth century.

It may be observed that the spelling *Plowman* is not a modern Americanism, but is favored by the manuscripts and employed by the best modern editors, as by Skeat in the "Encyclopedia Britannica" (article *Langland*); Mr. Wright, who in the title of his edition uses *Ploughman* in deference to the modern spelling in England, in the body of the poem regularly uses *Plowman*.

The "Creed of Piers Plowman," often printed with the "Vision," is a later work by another hand, and is not worthy of special consideration.

The opening of the Vision shows the author wandering alone on the picturesque Malvern Hills. There he sees "a fair feeld ful of folk," which is readily perceived to be the world and the people in it,—among whom various allegorical characters are soon distinguished, conspicuous among them being *Mede*, the Scriptural *Lucre* (but in many of her manifestations what we should now term *Bribery* or *Graft*) portrayed as an attractive woman, wonderful in richness of robes and jewels, about to proceed to the royal court to solemnize in presence of the King her stately marriage to *Fals* or *Falsenesse*. Numerous personifications, personified virtues and vices, qualities and personages rapidly appear, among them *Holy Church*, *Wit*, *Reason*, *Clergy*, *Gluttony*, *Waste*, *Hunger*, *Covetousness*, *Repentance*, *Kynde* (i. e., *Nature*), etc.

After *Reason* has preached repentance to the different classes of offenders, the multitude of repentant hearers set out on a pilgrimage in search of *Truth*.

Ac there was wight noon so wys  
But there was wight none so wise

The wey thider kouthe,  
The way thither knew,

But blustreden forth as beestes  
But (they) blustered forth as beasts

Over bankes and hilles;  
Over banks and hills;

Til late was and longe—  
*Till late (it) was and longe—*  
 (Lines 3529-3533.)

Then they meet a professional pilgrim, whose hat and robe are covered with relics of the holy places he professes to have visited.

To him they appeal, with this result:

"I have walked ful wide  
 In weet and in drye,  
 And sought goode seintes  
 For my soules helthe.  
 " 'Knowestow ought a corsaint\*  
 That men calle Truthe?  
 Koudestow aught wissen us the wey  
 Wher that wye† dwelleth?

"'Nay, so God me helpe!'  
 Seide the gome‡ thanne,  
 'I seigh nevere palmere,  
 With pyk ne with scrippe,  
 Asken after him er,||  
 Til now in this place.'"

(Lines 3563-3575.)

Then suddenly, without a particle of introduction, *Piers* (i. e., Peter) *the Plowman* "puts forth his head." He appears at first as simply a faithful, godly laborer. Do they want to find Truth? Is that all? He knows him well, and has "ben his folwere al this fifty wynter." He can take them right to him, as soon as he finishes sowing his "half-acre."

It is interesting to note that the plowman's wife

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\* Relic.    † Wight, person.    ‡ Man.    || Ere, ever.

was "*Dame Werch-whan-tyme-is*," while his daughter was named "*Do-wel-or-thi-dame-will-the-bete*." His sons and his horses have also sentence names. This fashion did not originate with John Bunyan or with the Puritans. But continually, as the poem advances, the character of Piers Plowman is exalted until he is recognized as the great Reformer and the true Regenerator of the world, and is at last distinctly identified with Christ himself.

There are three visions of hopeful characters known as *Do-wel*, *Do-bet* (better), and *Do-best*, whose names became popular catch-words among the laboring class.

"The poem is essentially one of those which improve on a second reading, and as a linguistic monument it is of very high value. . . . The whole deserves, and will repay, a careful study; indeed, there are not many single works from which a student of English literature and of the English language may derive more substantial benefit."  
—SKEAT in "*Encyclopædia Britannica*," article "*Langland*."

The poem of "Piers Plowman" was evidently very widely circulated, for it still exists in somewhat different forms in forty-eight manuscripts. The date of the poem seems to be quite clearly fixed, by historical events to which it refers, at or near the year 1362. "Piers Plowman" may thus be said to have opened the Chaucerian epoch, Chaucer being probably about twenty-two years of age at the time of its appearance. Yet this earlier poem uses as large a proportion of French and Latin words as

Chaucer himself, showing that these had become definitely a part of the English language at that date.

The versification of "Piers Plowman" is in the old Anglo-Saxon meter, depending upon alliteration, without rime, though the literary class had long before adopted the French meter and rime which still characterize English verse; but to Langland and those for whom he wrote the alliterative verse was evidently still "the good old way."

Yet, in spite of his leaning to the older English, the author uses Latin freely, dividing his poem into twenty (or, in some copies, twenty-three) *passus*, instead of *cantos*, as they would now be termed, with Latin titles. Texts of Scripture are quoted in Latin, and in one case (lines 255-276) :

"An aungel of hevene  
Lowed to speke in Latin,"

and uttered fourteen Latin lines in discussion of the royal authority. We are to remember that all churchmen were expected to know Latin. The Bible and Prayer Book were in Latin, state and church documents were commonly in Latin, so that in any company there was likely to be some one acquainted with that language; or, at least, some interpreter would be readily accessible.

But the author did not hesitate to give in the plainest English his idea of the true foundation of royal power :

"Than kam ther a kyng,  
Knyghthod hym ladde,  
Might of the communes  
Made hym to regne."

(Lines 223-226.)

It is fairly startling to find such a doctrine calmly stated in the middle of the fourteenth century. This doctrine did not originate in the time of Cromwell or of William III, but had been from the earliest period the underlying faith of the common people of England, which they were struggling to establish through the days of the Tudors, the Stuarts, and the Georges, until, in the twentieth century, it is the accepted principle of the English constitution that all the legislating and ruling power of the realm resides in the "might of the Commons."

But in spite of the Latin and Norman-French mixture, we find that in this poem of 1362 the construction of the sentence is so like that of modern English that it may now be freely read. Also, it is remarked that the conjugation of the verb and the use of auxiliaries were nearly the same as now; and that, whereas the Anglo-Saxon had no future tense, using the present form for both present and future time, as we still say, "I *sail* for England next week," yet in "Piers Plowman" the future auxiliaries *shall* and *will* are used in practically the same way as in modern English.

After the Reformation the general spirit and tone of "Piers Plowman" was found to accord so well

with the religious thought of the time that it was printed in 1550, under the reign of Edward VI, when three editions were sold in one year. It was again reprinted in 1561, three years after Elizabeth's accession, and, we are told, "It was evidently much read during the reign of Elizabeth, and is not infrequently alluded to by writers of that age."\* This is a most interesting fact, as showing that the language of this ancient poem was still intelligible to the ordinary English reader after the lapse of two hundred years.

The tone of the poem is sad, sometimes severe, but never fierce or bitter. The whole work is an expression of what we should now term social or industrial unrest. It depicts the hardships and miseries of the toilers and the social corruptions and oppressions under which they suffered, but it never incites to violence. Yet there is no doubt that, by giving voice to what multitudes felt, it helped to prepare the way for the great uprising of the Peasants' Revolt (called also Wat Tyler's Rebellion) of 1381, for "Piers Plowman" was quoted, and referred to admiringly, by the leaders of that revolt. Their references show that *Piers Plowman*, *Do-wel*, *Do-bet*, and *Do-best* had become household words, everywhere understood among the laboring class.

Another brief quotation may here be given to show the style of this poet of more than five hundred years ago. When Lady Mede (*Lucre or Graft*)

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\* THOMAS WRIGHT, "*Vision and Creed of Piers Ploughman*," Intro.

appears before the King, with the purpose of marriage to *Fals (Falsehood)*, the King proposes that she be wedded, instead, to stern and faithful *Conscience*—a union often attempted in later times. But *Conscience* protests:

(The alliterative letters in the original are here italicized.)

"Quod Conscience to the Kyng  
Christ it me forbede!  
Er I wedde swiche a Wif,  
Wo me betide!  
For she is frele of hire feith  
Fickel of hire speche,  
And maketh men mysdo,  
Many score tymes;  
Trust of her tresor  
Bitrayeth ful manye."

(Lines 1598-1606.)

Wyclif's prose quickly follows Langland's verse. John Wyclif was, in England at least, the foremost scholar of his day. A student, a fellow, and a doctor of Oxford University, at one time Master of Balliol College, he was "supreme in the philosophical disputation of the schools, and his lectures were crowded." In 1374 he was made rector of Lutterworth, and in the same year was a member of a royal commission to confer with legates of the Pope at Bruges. He then became famous as a popular preacher in London. The people responded eagerly to his trenchant criticisms of the folly and corruption so widely prevalent among the clergy and monks.

of the day. That which "Piers Plowman" lamented and which Chaucer so keenly satirized Wyclif attacked as something to be reformed. This at once brought him into the arena of controversy, and suddenly the great scholar and doctor of theology found himself attacked as a heretic.

The conditions against which Wyclif fought are thus summed up in the "Catholic Encyclopedia" (by F. F. Urquhart, article "Lollards") :

"In the Church there was nearly as much disorder as in the State. The pestilence (the Black Death) had in many cases disorganized the parish clergy, the old penitential system had broken down, while luxury, at least among the few, was on the increase. Preachers, orthodox and heretical, and poets as different in character as Langland, Gower, and Chaucer are unanimous in the gloomy picture they give of the condition of the clergy, secular and regular. However much may be allowed for exaggeration, it is clear that reform was badly needed."

His heresy was at first thoroughly English. It was simple patriotism. The English who had anciently defied the tyranny of the Roman Cæsar made no nice distinctions, but, while they accepted the religious leadership of the Pope, had always resented any claim of civil authority by the Roman pontiff.

Here was an irrepressible conflict. Numerous doctrinal points came to be involved, but this was the center of the controversy. Wyclif's position accorded well with the general trend of English thought, and so was popular, though few were ready to follow him to all his relentless conclusions.

The ecclesiastical authorities, of course, felt themselves bound to crush the disturber. From 1377 until his death he was never free from ecclesiastical attack and never faltered in his strenuous defense. Twice he was summoned before church tribunals, but sentence against him was defeated either by popular tumult or by court interference. Wyclif was left free, though in retirement at his rectory of Lutterworth, until a timely natural death, in 1384, placed him beyond the jurisdiction of any earthly tribunal.

These seven closing years, when the quiet scholar found himself thrust into the forefront of controversy, were the most fruitful of his life and were marked by amazing industry. After his break with the papacy, he settled it with himself that the supreme and final test of all truth must be the very words of the Holy Scriptures. Therefore the people must have the Bible in their own language, so that every one might read and learn for himself what was divinely revealed as Christian truth. Hence he set himself, with a small company of faithful scholars, to translate the entire Bible into English, and the translation was completed shortly before his death.

That translation and its influence upon the English language will be more fully treated in the chapter upon "The English Bible." The style of Wyclif's scriptural prose may be seen in the following verses from his translations:

"And the while he preide, the likenesse of his cheere  
was maad othir maner, and his clothing whit schynynge.  
And, loo! tweye men spaken with him; forsothe Moyses  
and Elye weren seyn in mageste; and thei seyden his  
goyng out, which he was to fillinge (fulfil) in Jerusalem.

"Forsooth Petre, and thei that weren with him, weren  
greued (or heued) with sleep, and thei waking syzen his  
mageste, and twei men that stooden with him. And it was  
don, whanne thei departiden fro him, Petre seith to Jhesu,  
Comandour, it is good to us for to be here, and make we  
here thre tabernaclis, oon to thee, and oon to Moyses, and  
oon to Elye; not wittinge what he schulde seye. Sotheli  
him spekinge thes thingis, a cloude was maad, and schade-  
wide hem; and thei dreddon hem entringe in to the clowde.  
And a vois was maad fro the clowde, seyinge, This is my  
dereworthe sone, heere ze him."—*Luke ix, 29-35.*

His Bible was read everywhere among the com-  
mon people, thus at once unifying and fixing the  
popular language. At the same time, with won-  
derful administrative ability, in his great contest against  
the hierarchy of Rome, Wyclif had sent out a host  
of disciples who are thus described by the historian  
Green:

"With the practical ability which marked his character,  
Wyclif set on foot about this time a body of poor  
preachers. The coarse sermons, bare feet, and russet dress  
of these 'Simple Priests' moved the laughter of rector and  
canon, but they proved a rapid and effective means of  
diffusing their master's doctrines. How rapid their pro-  
gress must have been we may see from the panic-struck  
exaggerations of their opponents. A few years later they  
complained that the followers of Wyclif abounded every-  
where and in all classes, among the baronage, in the  
cities, among the peasantry of the country-side, even in  
the monastic cell itself. 'Every second man one meets is

a Lollard.' 'Lollard,' a word which probably means 'idle babbler,' was the nickname with which the Orthodox churchmen chose to insult their assailants."

At the same time Wyclif was appealing to the people through a multitude of tracts which had the effect of still more thoroughly diffusing the English speech which he had adopted, among the people at large, than even the preaching of his disciples at every market-place and cross-roads could.

"With an amazing industry he issued tract after tract in the tongue of the people itself. The dry syllogistic Latin, the abstruse and involved argument which the great doctor had addressed to his academic hearers were suddenly flung aside, and by a transition which marks the wonderful genius of the man, the scholar was transformed into the pamphleteer. If Chaucer is the father of our later English poetry, Wyclif is the father of our later English prose. The rough, clear, homely English of his tracts, the speech of the plowman and the trader of the day, though colored with the picturesque phraseology of the Bible, is in its literary use as distinctly a creation of his own as the style in which he embodied it, the terse vehement sentences, the stinging sarcasms, the hard antitheses which aroused the dullest mind like a whip."

There seem to be good grounds to believe that the style of Wyclif influenced the English of Chaucer, for Chaucer was a protégé of John of Gaunt of the royal line, head of the House of Lancaster, who was also the patron and defender of Wyclif. It is thus but natural that Chaucer should have been brought much into association

with the followers and works of Wyclif, and his vigorous mind could not have failed to appreciate the power and vigor of the English which the great reformer was using in his scriptural translations and in his controversial tracts.

Prose of a far different type appears in "The Travels of Sir John de Mandeville," existing in three languages, Latin, French, and English—a work once considered to mark a definitely fixed date. The old knight who professed himself the author tells in the book itself how he sailed from England in 1322, and, after his wide journeys through the lapse of many years, returning aged and ill, wrote this book "in the year of grace 1356." But it seems now definitely settled that Sir John de Mandeville is an imaginary character and his journeys fictitious, taken bodily from other authors as far back as Pliny, and enriched by all kinds of fables, conceits and inventions, together with some novel facts that are interwoven, as of a "tree that produces wool" (the cotton-plant); that the real author was a physician of Liége, John de Bourgoyn, often called Jehan de La Barbe (John with the beard), who died in 1372. Thus we only know that the "Travels" must have been composed (without doubt in French) before that date. When or by whom the English translation was made can not be exactly determined, but it is evident that it was by some one thoroughly familiar with the idiomatic English of that day. Jusserand, from an examination of original sources,

says it "was made after 1377, and twice revised at the beginning of the fifteenth century."\*

Summing up the whole discussion, he says :

"One thing, however, remains, and can not be blotted out; namely, the book of travels bearing the name of Mandeville, the translation of which is one of the oldest and best specimens of English prose."†

Of the quality of the translation, Marsh says :

"Although the style and grammatical structure of Mandeville are idiomatic, yet the proportion of words of Latin and French origin employed by him, in his straightforward, unpoetical and unadorned narrative, is greater than that found in the works of Langlande, Chaucer, Gower or any other English poet of that century."‡

Among the words—144 in five chapters—that Marsh enumerates as new in Mandeville are many that we can scarcely imagine the English language ever to have existed without, such as : *abstain, appear, assembly, cherish, claim, command, conquer, contrary, enforce, foundation, glorious, glory, immortal, incline, menace, monster, nation, opinion, proclaim, promise, publish, receive, reconcile, title, translate, value, visit.*

The popularity of Mandeville's "Travels" was immense. Even at this day there remain about three hundred manuscripts of it. The English were then passionately fond of travels. Just as, in the time of Layamon, they were eager to escape from

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\* "A Literary History of the English People," vol. i, p. 406, note.

† *Ibid.*, p. 403. ‡ "Origin and History of the English Language," lect. vi, p. 268.

their brief barbaric history into classic antiquity by tracing their ancestry back to *Æneas* and making the story of the siege of Troy their own, so now they were eager to reach out from their beloved little island to learn all that could be known or told or imagined of the wide world, which did not yet include America. The diction of this ancient work bearing the name of Mandeville shows the degree of fulness, force, and elegance which English prose had at that period attained, while its popularity had the effect of making its felicitous style a standard for the after time.

A single extract will give an idea of the best popular English prose of the Chaucerian era:

"There is a vale betwene the mountaynes, that dureth nyghe a 4 myle; and summen clepen it the vale enchaunted, some clepen it the vale of Develes, and some clepen it the vale perilous. In that vale heren men often tyme grete tempestes and thondres, and grete murmures and noyses, alle dayes and nyghtes: and gret noyse, as it were sown of tabours and of nakeres and of trompes, as thoughe it were of a gret feste. This vale is alle fulle of develes, and hathe ben alle weys. And men seyn there that it is on of the entrees of helle. In that vale is gret plentee of gold and sylver: wherefore many mys-belevynge men, and manye Cristene men also, gon in often tyme, for to have of the thresoure that there is: but few comen agen; and namely of the mys-belevynge men, ne of the Cristene men nouther; for thei ben anon strangled of develes. . . . But the gode Cristene men that ben stable in the Feythe

entren welle withouten perile. For thei wil first schryven hem, and marken hem with the tokene of the Holy Cros; so that the fenes ne han no power over hem. But alle be it that thei ben withouten perile, yit natheles ne ben thei not withouten drede, whan that thei seen the develes visibly and bodily alle aboute hem, that maken fulle many dyverse assautes and manaces in eyr and in erthe, and agasten hem with strokes of thondre blastes and of tempestes. . . . And thus wee passeden that perilouse vale, and founden thereinne gold and sylver and precious stones and riche jewelles gret plentee, both here and there, as us semed; but whether that it was as us semede, I wot nere, for I touched none, because that the develes ben so subtile to make a thing to seme otherwise than it is, for to disceyve mankynde, and therefore I towched none; and also because that I wolde not ben put out of my devocioun, for I was more devout thanne, than evere I was before or after, and alle for the drede of fenes that I saughe in dyverse figures; and also for the gret multytude of dede bodyes that I saughe there liggyng be the weye be alle the vale, as thoughe there had ben a bataylle betwene 2 kynges and the myghtyest of the contree, and that the gretter partye had ben discomfyted and slayn. . . . But evere more God of his grace halp us; and so wee passed that perilous vale withouten perile and withouten encombrance. Thanked be alle myghty Godd."—"The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Maundeville."

John Gower (1325-1408) was somewhat older than Chaucer, but outlived him. He was rich and of good family, owning several manors. He had

none of Chaucer's vicissitudes and struggles, and knew nothing of the toilsome years that Chaucer spent when most prosperous. Gower was of blameless character, and took pains to make his verse extraordinarily clean, that is, according to the standards of that day, though a modern editor has felt constrained to issue an expurgated edition of his chief work. Chaucer called him "the moral Gower." He and Chaucer were friends, so that when Chaucer went abroad on his mission of 1378 he appointed Gower as one of two representatives or attorneys to act for him in his absence.

Gower, like so many of the scholarly men of his day, was a trilinguist, writing indifferently in Latin, French, or English, though he had to apologize for the defects of his French on the ground that he was, after all, and could not help being, English. His first important work, *Speculum Meditantis*—"The Mirror of the Meditative"—was in French; the second, *Vox Clamantis*—"The Voice of One Crying (in the Wilderness)"—was in Latin; the third, *Confessio Amantis*—"The Lover's Confession"—was in English; but even to this he felt bound to give a Latin title lest some should think that he knew no better language than English. It was only after Chaucer had become famed by his English poems that Gower undertook English verse, and, even then, as he tells us, at the special request of King Richard II. So, in 1383, he wrote his poem of "The Lover's Confession," in which the

typical lover of the olden time, scorned by the disdainful fair one, whom he nevertheless can not help loving and suffering for, appeals to *Venus*—a queer choice—to cure him of his malady. Venus sends him to a priest of hers, called *Genius*, to reclaim him. This confessor of the heathen goddess, who exhibits many of the characteristics of the ordinary Christian ecclesiastic of Gower's day, undertakes to cure the suffering lover by a series of discourses, in which he relates a variety of old Latin and Greek tales and legends, through about 30,000 lines. The plot is rather thin, but it served as a thread on which to string one hundred and twelve short stories, of which Jusserand remarks that "two or three of them are very well told."

The style of the poem may be sufficiently illustrated by an extract from the tale of *King Mide* (Midas) of Frige (Phrygia). It is to be noted how relentlessly Gower Anglicizes the ancient Greek and Latin names whenever they come in his way, with what we may call a peculiarly English independence, as the old-time Englishmen somehow twisted the Italian *Livorno* into *Leghorn*, and as the English "Tommy" of our own day, unable to pronounce *Ypres*—the name of the town in Western Flanders for which he fought so long—is abundantly satisfied to call it *Wypers*. The extract from the tale of Midas is as follows:

"This king with avarice is smitte  
That all the worlde it mighte witte.

For he to Bachus thanne preide,  
 That thereupon his hande he leide,  
 It shulde through his touche anone  
 Become gold, and thereupon  
 This god him graunteth as he bad.  
 \*Though was this king of Frige glad,  
 And for to put it in assay,  
 With all the haste that he may,  
 He toucheth that, he toucheth this,  
 And in his hond all gold it is.  
 The stone, the tree, the leef, the gras,  
 The flour, the fruit, all gold it was.  
 Thus toucheth he, while he may laste  
 To go, but hunger ate laste  
 Him toke so that he must nede  
 By way of kinde his hunger fede.  
 The cloth was laid, the bord was set,  
 And all was forth to-fore him set;  
 His dish, his cup, his drink, his mete,  
 But whan he wolde or drink or ete,  
 Anone as it his mouth cam nigh,  
 It was all gold, and than he sight  
 Of avarice the folie."

In his dismay the king prays the god to take back his deadly gift and is directed to bathe in the river Pactolus, when he is restored to normal humanity; but the river ever since has flowed over golden sands.

Gower's verse is octosyllabic, with eight syllables and four accents in each line, instead of the pentameter of Chaucer, which has five accents and ten (or more) syllables to the line. Gower seems easier reading than Chaucer, his verse running with a lilting, rippling cadence, which, however, becomes

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\* Then.      † Saw.

too uniform, as if the syllables had been counted off on the fingers, and suggesting the brook that "goes on forever." James Russell Lowell says:

"Gower had no notion of the uses of rhyme except as a kind of crease at the end of every eighth syllable where the verse was to be folded over again into another layer. He says, for example,

'This maiden Canacee was hight,  
Both in the day and eke by night,'

as if people commonly changed their names at dark. And he could not contrive to say even this without the clumsy pleonasm of *both* and *eke*.—"My Study Windows."

Gower had none of Chaucer's skill in type-painting and character-drawing, doubtless in part because his easy life had kept him from the close and earnest association with "all sorts and conditions of men," which had marked the busy and strenuous life of Chaucer. His verse is often easier to read just because he is not troubled with the strain of original thought but is abundantly content with mechanically jingling versification.

Yet Gower was for a time among his contemporaries more popular than Chaucer. The Englishmen of that day, while strong in business, in statesmanship, and in war, were in their literary childhood. They wanted stories, and Gower gave them stories. He brought to them all that ordinary readers among them would ever know of the tales and legends of ancient days, and in an easy-going meter and rime that could be followed without study and almost without exertion of thought.

The formative influence of his poetry must, therefore, have been very great, as numbers of people would read now one, now another, of his short stories in what was for them pleasing verse, and thus, by reading the commonplace, cultivating a linguistic sense that would qualify them to enjoy something better. The proportion of French and Latin derivatives in his poetry is about the same as in that of Chaucer. Like Chaucer, he used the East Midland dialect, his work helping to make that dialect what it has since become, the accepted standard of modern English.



**VI**

**CHAUCER**



## VI

### CHAUCER

THE chief poet of his own age, and one of the foremost of all ages, of English literature, was Geoffrey Chaucer. Of his life we know singularly little. The traditional "Life of Chaucer" has been clearly shown to be fictitious. The year of his birth, long given as 1328, is now, for what seem sound reasons, set as late as 1340, a date that harmonizes with the known events of his life. Lounsbury remarks :

"Unhappily, the scantiness of the material for the poet's life does not involve a corresponding brevity in its treatment. . . . The biography of Chaucer is built upon doubts, and thrives upon perplexities. Without these there would be exceedingly little to say. Uncertainty begins with the date of his birth, it hovers over most of his career, and adds to the length of the narrative as inevitably as it detracts from its interest."

—"Studies in Chaucer," vol. i, p. 11.

We know that the great poet was in his youth a page in one of the royal households, then a soldier who became a prisoner of war in France, and later an esquire of the king; that he was sent abroad on various important royal commissions, to Flanders, to France, and twice to Italy.

From 1374 until his death he held, with some

interruptions, a number of civil offices which show him to have been a competent and trustworthy man of affairs. In 1386 he was elected a member of Parliament from Kent. In 1374 he is described as being "in a whirl of prosperity." Later in life, by the lapse of offices and the mutations of politics, he saw periods of straitened circumstances so common in the lives of men of letters, during one of which he wrote the well-known "Compleynte to His Purse":

#### THE COMPLEYNT OF CHAUCER TO HIS PURSE

"To yow my purse and to noon other wighte  
Complayne I, for ye be my lady dere!  
I am so sory now that ye been lyghte,  
For certes yf ye make me hevy chere,  
Me were as leef be layde upon my bere.  
For whiche unto your mercy thus I crye,  
Beeth hevy ayeyne, or elles mote I die.

Now voucheth sauf this day, or hyt be nyghte,  
That I of yow the blissful sounre may here,  
Or see your colour lyke the sunne bryghte,  
That of yelownesse hadde never pere.  
Ye be my lyf! ye 'be myn hertys stere!  
Quene of comfort and good compayne!  
Beth hevy ayeyne, or elles moote I dye!"

The busy years up to the close of 1378, when he returned from his second expedition to Italy, have been styled his "unproductive period," but in them he was becoming the many-sided man of the world and of affairs that made possible the power of his

later poems. His chief poetic work seems to have been produced during the fifteen years from 1378-1394, at which latter date he writes as if his day of poetry were past.

Chaucer appears to have been married before 1367 and his wife is believed to have died in 1387. She bore the name of Philippa, was one of the maids of the queen, and is believed to have been sister-in-law of John of Gaunt, Edward III's fourth son, so called because born in Ghent. Chaucer always belonged to the political party of this powerful nobleman, who was viewed as his patron and granted him many favors. It has been already mentioned that John of Gaunt was also the patron and protector of Wyclif. When Henry I, son of John of Gaunt, became king, in 1399, Chaucer was at once received into favor for the short remnant of his life.

Notable among the formative incidents of his career are his two journeys to Italy (1372 and 1378). His knowledge of the Italian language and literature distinctly and favorably affected all his later work. Italy, with its ancient monuments and classic memories, seems always to have had an expanding and inspiring influence upon Englishmen of the olden time, as notably in the case of Alfred the Great. Whereas Chaucer's early work was largely based upon French models, he was later greatly influenced by the Italian, especially by Boccaccio. Hence his literary life has been conveniently divided into three periods—French, Italian, and

English. His various foreign expeditions took from him all narrow "insularity" so that, while stoutly an Englishman at heart, he had a vivid conception of the greater and older world beyond the boundaries of England.

Chaucer is commonly supposed to have introduced a great number of French and Latin words into our vocabulary, and to have overloaded the English language with these elements. In fact, he supplied few, if any, that were not already in use. Chaucer, though of courtly connections, aspired to be a popular poet, and no author becomes popular by the use of strange and unusual words. Moreover, to have put pedantic, learned words into the mouth of the Host of the Tabard, the Miller or the Wife of Bath would have been a violation of all literary probability, so incongruous as to be ridiculous. As we say in modern phrase, it would have "killed the book."

It has been already shown how largely and how inevitably the new English of the fourteenth century had adopted French and Latin words and derivatives to fill up its impoverished vocabulary. We find such words in the poem of "Piers Plowman," in the tracts and in the Bible of Wyclif, in the "Travels of Sir John de Mandeville" and in the "Confessio Amantis" of Gower. The diction of Wyclif's Bible, indeed, is predominantly Anglo-Saxon, seeking always for the simplest word that will carry the meaning of the Scriptural text to the

unlearned man. Yet he translated from the Latin Vulgate, and much of the theological language was derived from the Latin through the church, so that he uses many words of Latin derivation, as *multitude, command, ordain, infirmities, disciple, substance, temptation, deliver*, etc. In Langland, "Mandeville," and Gower, the proportion of French and Latin words or derivatives is as large as in Chaucer. Langland evidently wrote his "Piers Plowman" for the common people, and it was popular among them. The "Travels of Mandeville" seem to have been widely and eagerly read by all classes. Gower, as already stated, was for a time more popular than Chaucer. These French and Latin derivatives were in the English language of the day, and there was a tendency toward an undue predominance of the foreign element, as English was still felt in all courtly and learned circles to be an inferior speech, a language of mere communication, but not of literature. Chaucer first showed decisively its high literary possibilities and proved the English language to be admirable and beautiful by and for itself. "With Chaucer, indeed, began *the arrest of the rapid changes* that were going on in the development of the English tongue."\*

What Chaucer did was to select, as every great writer does, from the materials of speech about

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\* LOUNSBURY, "Studies in Chaucer," vol. ii, ch. 6, p. 437. Italics by present author.

him, those words and phrases which he feels to be most clear, vigorous, delicate or elegant, fullest of worthy association, most far-reaching in suggestion, most euphonious as words, most harmonious as set in phrases, and in each instance fittest for the meaning then and there to be expressed. Because a truly great writer is always one endowed with good taste, keen perception, sound judgment and with that linguistic sense of the possibilities of language which is as innate and incomminable as the military sense of a great commander, his choice dominates the minds of his readers and tends at once to popularize and to fix the forms of language he has chosen. Because a great writer cares for something more, and is capable of something more than diction, he puts into his chosen words thoughts that the world will not willingly let die, and his writings thus establish an influential and enduring standard. Thus Lowell says of Chaucer:

"He found our language lumpish, stiff, unwilling, too apt to speak Saxonly in grouty monosyllables; he left it enriched with the longer measure of the Italian and Provençal poets. He reconciled, in the harmony of his verse, the English bluntness with the dignity and elegance of the less homely Southern speech. Though he did not and could not create our language . . . yet it is true that he first made it easy, and to that extent modern, so that Spenser, two hundred years later, studied his method and called him master."

—*"My Study Windows," Chaucer*, p. 265.

When Chaucer became famous many poems were attributed to him that were not his, as the "Testa-

ment of Love," etc., which have been proved not to be by Chaucer, and some of which have now been traced to other authors. "The undisputed poetry of Chaucer is found to fall under twenty-six titles, and to embrace nearly thirty-five thousand lines—in precise figures thirty-four thousand, nine hundred and twenty-six."\*

One who would be sure that he is really reading Chaucer should depend only upon a good standard edition, as that of Robert Bell or Skeat, and should note well the introductory matter, in which the doubtful poems or portions of poems are commonly so indicated.

His genuine poetry needs a certain wise discrimination in the reading. He was too ready to make the coarser personages he introduced speak in character, and for some of his story-telling he seems to have taken for his model the tales enjoyed and applauded at a class of convivial feasts where grossness was a recommendation. For all this the only plea in defense is that this early poet followed some of the worse tendencies of a coarse, rude age in the dawn of English literature and civilization.

Largely free from such blemishes are the "Troylus and Cryseyde," the "Legende of Goode Women" (though among them he oddly enough places *Dido* and *Cleopatra*), the "House of Fame," the "Romtaunt (Romance) of the Rose," "The Boke of the Duchesse," and the "Assembly of Foules"; also the

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\* LOUNSBURY, "Studies in Chaucer," vol. ii, ch. 4, p. 3.

famous and vivid "Prologue" to the "Canterbury Tales," and, among the "Tales," those of the *Knight*, the *Man of Law*, the *Frere* (Friar), the *Clerk*, the *Squire*, the *Frankeleyne*, the *Pardoner*, the *Prioresse*, the *Nonne Prest* (Nuns' Priest), the *Chanounes Yemanne* (Canon's Yeoman), and the *Persone* (Parson).

So much has been written, and much of it so well, upon the poetry of Chaucer that no general discussion need be here attempted. We may only give certain brief selections, less familiar than those commonly quoted, but so simple in style as to be read without special difficulty. First, a stanza from the "Romaunt of the Rose":

"Hard is his hert that loveth nought,  
 In May, whan al this mirth is wrought;  
 Whan he may on these braunches here  
 The smale briddes syngen clere  
 Her blesful swete song pitous,  
 And in this sesoun delytous,  
 Whan love affraith\* al thing."

Next, the description of *Cryseyde* (Cressida):

"Cryseyde menet† was of hire stature;  
 Thereto of shap, of face, and ek of cheere,  
 Ther myghte be no fairer creature;  
 And ofte tyme this was hire manere,  
 To gon ytressed with hire heres clere,  
 Doun by hire coler, at hire back byhynde,  
 Which with a threde of gold she wolde bynde.

"And, save hire browes joyneden yfeere,  
 Ther nas no lakke in ought I kan espien;

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\* Agitates.

† Short.

But for to speken of hire eyen clere,  
Loo! trewely they writen that hire seyen,  
That Paradys stood formed in hire yen;  
And with hire riche beaute everemore  
Strof love in hire, ay whiche of hem was moore.

"She sobre was, ek symple, and wyse withalle,  
The best ynorissed ek that mighte be,  
And goodely of hire speche in general,  
Charytable, estateliche, lusty, and fre;  
Ne neveremoo ne lakked hire pyte,  
Tendre harted, slidynge of corage;  
But trewely I kan not telle hire age."

—*"Troilus and Cryseyde,"* bk. v, st. 116.

We have crossed six centuries from the earliest Anglo-Saxon literature, if we date the poem of Beowulf (as there seems reason to do) in the eighth century. We have come from a language which suggests English but is so unlike it that the modern English-speaking man must read it with grammar and dictionary, to a language so like that of our own day that we only smile at the queer spelling and occasionally look up an obsolete word. We readily see that "morwenyng" is "morning," that "sorwe" is "sorrow," that "atte" is "at the," and that "nathelass" is "nevertheless." Many of the words now disused are recognizable. "Quod" is still found as "quoth" in old or old-fashioned poetry. In Cowper's "John Gilpin" we read:

" 'Good lack!' quoth he,  
'Yet bring it me,' "

and every schoolboy knows that "quoth he" means

"*said he*"; "*eke*" is familiar enough as meaning "also"; "*wiste*" for "know" or "knew" is common in our English Bible, though there spelled "wist"; "*eyrē*" for "air," "*erthe*" for "earth," "*fendes*" for "fiends," "*saugh*" for "saw," are easily followed. We note the craving for inflection which often contracts the pronoun *thou* into a mere verb ending, as in *shaltow* for "*shalt thou*," "*wiltow*" for "*wilt thou*," etc.; also the contraction of the negative *ne* ("not") into one form with the verb, as *niste* for *ne wiste*, etc.; and we find the *th*, which we know only as the old form of the third person singular of the indicative, used as the ending of the imperative, as in *beeth* for the modern *be*. All these things are easily and quickly learned by mere reading of the text, with occasional help of a marginal note.

As to the spelling, we need have little concern. The authors themselves had often no sure standard. Numerous words had been roughly shaped in the attempt to represent in writing the sounds heard in utterance. The same author in the same poem will often spell the same word two or more different ways, as in Chaucer's "Compleynte to His Purse," already quoted, we find at the end of the first stanza *ayeyne* (again) and *mote* (must), while at the end of the second stanza the same words are given as *ageyne* and *moot*.

We must remember that inaccuracy of reproduction did not originate with modern stenographers and typewriters. The ancient manuscript-copyists

were great sinners in this respect. In the manuscripts of Gower that he has examined, Mr. Morton W. Eastman remarks:\*

"We find such constantly recurring forms as *astat* for *estat*, *wich* and *whas* for *which* and *was*, *dishese* for *disease*, *Jubiter* for *Jupiter*, *strenth* for *strength*, while *world* and *word* are so frequently interchanged that wherever either fails to make sense, it is quite safe to substitute the other."

Chaucer writes almost in despair to his own private secretary or "scrivener":

"Adam Scrivener, if ever it thee befalle  
Boece or Troilus for to write new,  
Under thy long locks thou maist have the scalle,  
But after my making thou write more trew!  
So oft a day I mote they werke renew,  
It to correct and eke to rubbe and natuoan utnoaun  
And all is thorow thy negligence and rape."‡

When that was true of manuscripts that passed under his own eye, and which he could "correct, rubbe, and scrape," we can imagine what happened to the additional copies which he never saw. Then, when printing began, we know that Caxton made some changes to what seemed to him better English, and we may be sure that typesetters made their average complement of errors, and Chaucer was not there to read the proof. The only approach to accuracy now possible is by comparing the best

\* "Readings in Gower," p. 4.

† Unless.

‡ Reckless haste.

manuscripts, and, where they differ, selecting the reading which the best critical judgment believes to be probably correct.

The pronunciation of English in Chaucer's day is now unknown, just as is the pronunciation of ancient Greek or of classic Latin. Spoken speech dies with its utterance. Professor Lounsbury, after careful examination, is of the opinion that some real progress has been made in the attempt to recover by critical methods the ancient sounds of Chaucerian English. But he expresses himself as very doubtful—and apparently with much reason—of the utility of such study to the ordinary student. When the English-speaking reader of the modern day comes to Chaucer, he is first of all repelled by the antiquated spelling. This removes the old poet far enough. At length the reader learns to understand *eyre* as *air*, *seke* as *sick*, *morwenyng* as *morning*, etc. If now you insist that he must learn a new and strange pronunciation, that most vowels and many consonants shall have sounds quite different from those in modern English, you have made the old poet essentially a foreign author, with little that is familiar either to eye or ear. But the thing to be desired is to bring these early poems as near as possible to modern English, not to place them as far as possible away.

The reader who has not time for a critical course of Old English study will find it possible to read Chaucer or Gower, Langland or Wyclif, enjoyably

by the simple expedient of learning when to sound and when to pass over the mute *e* at the end of words. Then he may give vowels and consonants substantially the same sounds as in modern English. He will quickly learn that in some instances the sound of *a* as in *father*, for instance, is preferable to that of *a* in *fate*, especially in words of French origin, as *courage*. The meter will show him that this, and certain other words, are to be accented on the last syllable; thus: *cou-rage'* for *cour-age*, *li-cour'* for *liq'uor*, *na-ture'* for *na'ture*, *ver-tue'* for *vir'tue*. Yet the poet freely varies these accents according to the exigencies of his verse, just as the spelling is often varied for no assignable reason. One will do well to remember, also, the interchangeableness, already referred to, of *u* and *v*, so that *eueriche* is *everiche*—*every*.

By the mastery of these simple items, together with a little practise, without attempting to be too critical or scholarly, the ordinary reader will be able to attain a skill in reading aloud the Chaucerian poetry, such that its meaning will be clearer to himself than when he confines his attention to the printed page. The spelling will be less in his way. Also he will be able to make the reading pleasant and quite readily intelligible to others.

This method may not meet the demands of the highest scholarship, but it will be useful to practical men and women who wish to get from this ancient poetry such enjoyment and instruction as they may.

We may append here Skeat's explication of the Chaucerian meter from the Introduction to his edition of Chaucer's works:

"A metrical analysis of the first few lines of the Prologue, in which examples of most of the peculiarities of inflexion and accentuation alluded to in the introduction occur, will, it is hoped, enable the reader to conquer any difficulties of this nature that may present themselves in the verse. The principles here indicated will be found applicable throughout the poem. This is Tyrwhitt's plan; but it will be seen that, as the text is different from his, so also is the meter. The marks of *long* and *short*, properly applied to the classical meters only, are here used as being plainer than an accent on the accented syllables:—

'Whān thāt / April / lē wīth / hīs schōw / rēs swōote  
 Thē drōught / öf Mārche / häth pēr / cēd tō / thē rōote,  
 Änd bā / thūd ēve / rÿ vēyne / īn swich / līcōur,  
 Öf whīch / vērtüe / ēngēn / drēd īs / thē flōur;  
 Whān Zē / phȳrūs / ēek wīth / hīs swē / tē brēeth  
 Enspī / rūd häth / īn ēve / rÿ hōlte / änd hēeth  
 Thē tēn / drē crōp / pēs, änd / thē yōn / gē sōnne  
 Häth īn / thē Rām / hīs häl / fē cōurs / i-rōnne,  
 Änd smā / lē fōw / lēs mā / kēn mē / lōdie,  
 Thāt slē / pēn äl / thē night / wīth ö / pēn ýhe,  
 Sō prik / éth hēm / nātūre / īn hēre / cōrāges:—  
 Thānne lōn / gēn fōlk / tō gōn / ön pil / grīmāges, &c.'

"Here the final *e* in *Aprille*, *swete*, *halfe*, *yonge*, *smale* is pronounced; but it is quiescent in *Marche*, *veyne*, *nature*, because in these cases it is followed by a word beginning with a vowel, or with the letter *h*. This is the rule of French poetry. The final *es* is pronounced in *croppes*, *fowles*, as in Ger-

man. The French words *licour*, *nature*, *corages* are accented on the last syllable of the root, as in French. The reader will also remark the old forms of *hem* and *here*, for *them* and *their*; and *slepen*, *maken*, the Anglo-Saxon inflexion of the infinitive and plural verb: *i-ronne* is also the pret. part. of *rennen*, to run, as in German, *gelobt*, from *loben*."

Something must be said of Chaucer's vigorous prose, in which the reader will find often less difficulty than in his poetry, while, on the other hand, he will miss the aid afforded in the poems by meter and rime. The following extract is selected from the "Parson's Tale," and should be read in connection with the description of the "poore parson of a toun" in the "Prologue to the Canterbury Tales":

#### DE INVIDIA

"After pride now wol I speke of the foule synne of envy, which that is, as by the word of the philosophre, sorwe of other mennes prosperite; and after the word of seint Austyn, is it sorwe of other mennes wele, and joye of other mennes harm. . . . Certes than is envy the worste synne that is; for sothely alle other synnes ben somtyme onlyng agains oon special vertu; but certes envy is agayns alle vertues and agayns al goodness; for it is sory of alle the bountees of his neighbor; and in this manner it is divers from alle the synnes; for wel unnethe is ther any synne that it ne hath some delit in itself, sauf only envy, that ever hath in itself anguisch and sorwe. The spices (*species*) of envy ben these. There is firste sorwe of other mennes goodness and of her (*their*) prosperite; and prosperite is kyndely (*naturally*) matier of joye; thanne is envy a synne agayns kynde (*nature*). The setounde spice (*species*) of envy is joye of other mennes harm; and that is proprely lik to the devyl, that

ever rejoynet him of mennes harm. Of these tuo spices (*species*) cometh bakbyting; and this synne of bakbyting or detraccioun hath certein spices (*species*), as thus: som man praisith his neighbor by a wickid entent, for he makith alway a wickid knotte atte (*at the*) last ende; alway he makith a but at the last ende, that is thing of more blame than worth is al the praysing."

This closing hit, while put into the mouth of the "poore parson," is peculiarly Chaucerian,—the "wickid knotte at the last ende," the "*but*" that is "thing of more blame than worth all the praising."

To what period of English literature shall the Chaucerian English be assigned? Shall we count Chaucer as the last of the ancient or the first of the modern writers? He is too English to be classed with the Anglo-Saxons, too antiquated to be ranged beside the writers of the time of Elizabeth, Anne or Victoria.

Eminent scholars have attempted various divisions of English literature into periods, and almost any one of these divisions might be useful if there were no other, so that, when we should name any period, all students of English literature would get the same idea from that name. Unfortunately almost every leading scholar has objected to the system of his predecessors and formulated a new division of his own. This would seem to indicate that no one of these systems is founded upon anything vital or final. The following summary of some approved divisions is given in the "Standard Dictionary":

"There are four periods of the history of the English language: (a) The period from the earliest Teutonic speech in England (A. D. 450 to 1150), the *Anglo-Saxon* period; lately often called *Old English*, *Oldest English*. It was the period of full inflection. (b) The period from A. D. 1150 to A. D. 1350, called *Early English*, during which the inflections were broken up (1150 to 1250) and large numbers of French words added to the vocabulary (1250 to 1350). (c) The period from 1350 to 1485, the Chaucer period, the *Old English* of literature, now often called *Middle English*, in which the Saxon and Norman elements were shaped into a new literary language. (d) The period since 1485, called *Modern English*, of which the period from 1485 to 1611 is called *Tudor English*."

On studying this brief statement, we find that the name *Old English* is applied by some to the *Anglo-Saxon* period (450 to 1150), and by others to the period of Chaucer (1150 to 1485),—periods centuries apart. Also it appears that still others call this "Chaucer period" *Middle English*. But Craik uses *Middle English* as designating the period from 1350 to 1530. Hence any one of these names is useless, unless defined for the occasion. You must know in which sense the name is used by the author you are reading or the lecturer to whom you are listening; so that one is reminded of the criticism that an Ohio horseman passed on a Texas pony: "I don't like a horse that you have to break every time you hitch him up." *Transition English*, proposed by others, is a very alluring term, but likewise too variously applied; "transition" is always progressive, and who shall say just where it begins and

ends? The attempt is like that of dividing the waters of a river according to its velocity at different points. Where do the Rapids of Niagara begin? We can locate the Falls, the source, the mouth and certain intervening geographical points. So the flowing stream of literature is best divided by certain events, authors or documents so conspicuous as to be easily remembered, and at the same time so connected with some change of the literature in tone and type as to mark a real division. Without attempting a minutely critical or philological division of periods, the present author has found the following to be a convenient memory-scheme to be easily fixed by certain prominent events, authors or documents; thus (holding all dates to round numbers):

#### Period

1. Anglo-Saxon Conquest to the death of Alfred (450 to 900).
2. Death of Alfred to end of Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (900-1150).
3. End of Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to Proclamation of Henry III (1150-1250),—one hundred years, including Layamon and Orm.
4. Barren Century (1400-1525).
5. Chaucerian period (1350-1400)—Death of Chaucer.
6. Barren Century (1400 to 1526)—Tyndale's New Testament.

Chaucer died in 1400, was buried in Westminster Abbey, and was the first to occupy a tomb in what is now known as the Poet's Corner.

Incidentally it may be remarked that the student

will find the year 1400, that of Chaucer's death, a most convenient date to remember. Before it are to be ranged at brief intervals the "Vision of Piers Plowman" (1362); the prose treatises and tracts of Wycklif and his translation of the Bible (1377-1384); the Peasants' Revolt (or Wat Tyler's Rebellion) of 1381, and the accession of Henry of Lancaster as Henry IV in 1399.

The close of the great poet's life occurred nearly a thousand years after the Anglo-Saxon invaders first landed in England; fifty-five years before the Wars of the Roses began; eighty-five years before the victory of Bosworth Field placed the Duke of Richmond upon the throne as Henry VII, first of the Tudor line (1485); fifty-three years before the capture of Constantinople by the Turks (1453), which, by scattering the Greeks and Greek learning over Europe, did so much to usher in the Renaissance; ninety-two years before the discovery of America by Columbus, with all that that has meant to history and civilization; eighty-three years before the birth of the great German Reformer, Martin Luther; just one hundred years before the birth of the mighty emperor of Germany and disturber of the world, Charles V. Chaucer's closeness to great Italian authors is also noticeable. Dante, who died in 1321, was to him a modern poet; Boccaccio (1313-1375) was his contemporary; so also was Petrarch (1304-1374), whom he doubtless visited at Padua. By assembling such dates we are no

longer surprised that the English of Chaucer seems old, but rather that it seems so young, with a morning freshness, after the lapse of more than five centuries.

It has been somewhat common, as shown in the schemes already given, to sink Chaucer in a period of *Old English* or *Middle English* extending from 1350 to 1485. But the latter seems an artificial date. Politically, indeed, the accession of Henry VII, as first of the Tudor line, was of vast importance, but linguistically it is scarcely noticeable. The English style immediately preceding it is in no way clearly marked off from that which immediately follows, for there is no English authorship worthy of note in all the dreary fifteenth century, nor, indeed, until the publication of Tyndale's New Testament in 1526. Through that troubled time England was enduring as best she might, but not creating. The "Compendiums of English Literature" have been most unfortunate in bringing into Chaucer's train a procession of authors whom it would be flattery to call commonplace. The student, floundering in a morass of mediocrities, is interested in nothing but in some way of escape, and desires never again to hear of "English Literature." Let oblivion have its own. Let Chaucer's great epoch close with his life and be designated by his name.

VII  
**THE ENGLISH BIBLE**



## VII

### THE ENGLISH BIBLE

FROM Chaucer's day a century and a half of stormy national life, with fierce conflicts at home and abroad, produced few writings that are now of permanent importance to the English-speaking peoples. The works that then appeared are for the most part of interest to the scholar who has time for the niceties of literature. They kept the language alive as the circulating system keeps the hibernating animal alive through a long winter. Sir Thomas More's "Utopia," published during the reign of Henry VIII (1516), is a book of immortal fame, so that its title has become a household word. Lord Berners' translation of Froissart's *Chronicles* (1525) is a work of lasting value. Some lovely passages occur in the poems of James I of Scotland, who, by his knowledge of English acquired during his long captivity in England, may be ranked as an English poet. Sir Thomas Malory's "Morte d'Arthur" (1485) holds high rank as a reservoir for writers of verse, having influenced many eminent poets of later time. Surrey and Wyatt permanently influenced the form of later English verse. More important than these, the beauty and formative power of the English translations of the

Scriptures by Tyndale and his successors became mighty and controlling influences upon our language, reaching on through the Authorized Version of the Scriptures to our own day.

The English Bible is for the present purpose to be considered simply as literature. No question of religion, theology or doctrine is here involved. As a part of English literature the English Bible holds a remarkable and commanding position.

"It is a noteworthy circumstance in the history of literature of Protestant countries that, in every one of them, the creation or revival of a national literature has commenced with, or at least been announced by, a translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular, which has been remarkable both as an accurate representative of the original text and as an exhibition of the best power of expression possessed by the language at that stage of its development. Hence, in all these countries, these versions have had a very great influence, not only upon religious opinion and moral training, but upon literary effort in other fields, and indeed upon the whole philological history of the nation. Thus the English translation of the Wycliffite school, the Danish version of 1550 and the German of Luther are, linguistically considered, among the very best examples of the most cultivated phase and most perfected form of their respective languages at the time when they appeared."

—MARSH, "*Origin and History of the English Language*," lect. viii, p. 344.

Of the books to be read, we would place first the English Bible in the authorized version. Hamilton W. Mabie characterizes this as "a library of sixty-six volumes presenting nearly every literary form,

and translated at the fortunate moment when the English language had received the recent impress of its greatest masters in the speech of the imagination." The eminent English scholar, Richard Garnett, remarks :

"There is no literature, at least no important literature, so largely indebted as the English to a collection of writings in a foreign language, produced under circumstances exceedingly dissimilar to any that ever existed in England, of which every individual author is not merely an Oriental but one absolutely estranged by blood from all the families which have combined to form the British race. . . . There is no other example of a literature having assimilated a foreign element so completely to itself. . . . [This has resulted in] an elevation, a picturesqueness, and an affluence of beautiful sentiment which confers on the literature of these [English-speaking] peoples a great advantage over those which, whether from natural incapacity or the impediments created by sinister interests, have been more or less debarred from this treasury of grandeur. All modern nations, indeed, have borrowed more or less from the Scriptures, and been more or less influenced by them as literature, but the Northern nations alone, and more particularly the British, have so thoroughly assimilated them that they seem to have naturalized patriarchs and prophets as their own countrymen."

—GARNETT and GOSSE, "*English Literature*," vol. i, ch. 7,  
p. 204.

Far back in the early days appeared an Anglo-Saxon translation of the Gospels. Of this Marsh says :\* "We know not the history, the author, nor the precise date of this translation, but it belongs to the best period of the literature, and was made

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\* "Origin and History of the English Language," lect. iii, p. 96.

from the [Latin] Vulgate, or more probably, perhaps, from some nearly similar Latin version."

Skeat\* places the earlier, the "Corpus" manuscript, as made before 1000 A. D., and the later, the "Hatton" manuscript, with somewhat changed idiom, after 1150 A. D.

The following selection, containing the Parable of the Sower, will give an adequate idea of this translation of nine hundred years ago:

**ANGLO-SAXON TRANSLATION OF THE GOSPELS—  
CORPUS MANUSCRIPT (BEFORE 1000 A. D.)  
MATTHEW XIII**

1. On tham daege tham haelende ut-gangendum of  
huse he saet with tha sae.
2. & mycle maenigeo waeron gesamnode to hym  
swa that he eode on scyp & thaer saet, and eall  
seo maenigeo stod on tham waronhe.
3. & he spraec to hym fela big-spellum, cwethende;  
Sothlice ut-eode se saedere hys saed to  
sawenne;
4. & tha tha he seow, sume hig feollen with weg, &  
fuglas comun & aeton tha;
5. Sothlice sume feollen on staenihte thaer hyt  
naefde mycle eorthan. & hraedlice upsprungon  
for-tham the hig naefton thaere eorthan dypan;
6. Sothlice upsprunggenre sunnan adruwudon &  
forscruncon, for tham the hig naefdon wyr-  
trum.
7. Sothlice sume feollon on thornas, & tha thornas  
weoxon & for-thrysmudon tha.

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\* W. W. SKEAT, "*The Holy Gospels in Anglo-Saxon.*"

8. sums sothlice feollon on gode eorthan & seal-don waestm. sum hund-fealdne, sum sixtig fealdne, sum thriddig fealdne.

9. Se the haebbe earan to gehyrenne gehyre.

We do not know to what extent this Anglo-Saxon version was circulated nor what influence it may have had. The fact that it was made, however, tells of an early demand, and its preservation for so long a period indicates that it was not without effect. It is remarkable that this ancient version can be read with so little difficulty now. This is due to the fact that all the later English translations of the Scriptures have continued to use so large a percentage of Anglo-Saxon words, which have thus become an indestructible part of English speech.

Ælfric, the indefatigable scholar (about 925-1020), is sometimes credited with a translation of the Bible into English. But this was not strictly a translation, and not all his own.

"Ælfric, thus urged (by thegn Aethelward) translated *Genesis* up to chapter xxiv. The rest, as far as the end of *Leviticus*, was not his doing. He also translated *Numbers*, *Deuteronomy*, *Joshua*, the book of *Judges* (but that may be a later insertion), and the books of *Esther*, of *Job*, and of *Judith*. All of them, except the *Genesis*, are not literal translations. Difficult passages, and others not likely to interest the English people, are omitted. Some books, like *Judges*, are put into a homiletic form. Others might be described as heroic sketches of the lives of the heroes and Kings of Israel. Ælfric strives to paint them in vivid colors, to sharpen their individuality; it was an effort he made to interest the people in Jewish history."

—STOPFORD A. BROOKE, "*History of English Literature to the Norman Conquest*," ch. 17, p. 283.

Ælfric was a monk, and held strenuously to the opinion that prevailed for a long time after the Reformation that the common people could not be trusted to read the Scriptures without note or comment for themselves. Hence he took the short method of omitting "many subtle points, which ought not to be laid open to the laity." His so-called "translation" may therefore be dismissed without further consideration.

The first translation of the Bible as a whole into English, as distinguished from Anglo-Saxon, was that of Wyclif during the great awakening of English life and the formative period of English literature in the Chaucerian epoch, at the close of the fourteenth century.

John Wyclif was born in 1324. At sixteen he entered Oxford, where he distinguished himself in logic and theology and was elected Master of Balliol College in that great seat of learning, receiving what was then the exalted degree of Doctor of Divinity. He held many important posts, and gained great eminence and authority as the foremost English scholar of his day.

The period was still in the Middle Ages, which are commonly reckoned from the downfall of the Roman Empire, in A. D. 476, to the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453—almost a thousand years. The organized church had reached perhaps the lowest depth of corruption. The monasteries, originally designed as the retreats of poor

and devout men who should live simply, working with their hands and devoting their lives only to spiritual service in this world and the hope of eternal life beyond, had become, by the gifts of kings and barons, immensely wealthy, holding great tracts of the fairest lands in England. With wealth and idleness had come the corruption of character that always attends that condition, under whatever name. It came to the idle monks of the Middle Ages as surely as to idle sons of millionaires to-day.

Good and devout men were still within the fold of the church, but they were, for the most part, in humble stations, having neither the heart nor the art to seek the high places by the unworthy means then requisite for winning them. Such a one Chaucer depicts—the only deeply religious man he brings before us—in the “pore Persone (parson) of a toun”:

“But riche he was of holy thought and werk.  
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,  
That Cristes gospel trewly wolde preche;  
His parischens devoutly wolde he teche.  
Benynghe he was, and wonder diligent,  
And in aduersite full pacient.

Wyd was his parisch and houses fer asondur,  
But he ne lafte nat for reyne ne thondur,  
In siknesse ne in meschief to visite  
The ferrest (farthest) in his parissche, moche and  
lite (little, i. e. Humble),  
Upon his feet and in his hond a staf.  
This noble ensample to his scheep he gaf,  
That ferst he wroughte, and after that he taughte.”

But such true men, where they were found, worked under hindrance that we can scarcely understand, for they were teaching people who had no Bible. The Scriptures were then only to be found in the Latin translation, called the Latin Vulgate, which few except the clergy, and not all of the clergy of that day, could read. Let any Christian worker of to-day try to imagine what it would be now, in church and Sunday-school and personal work, to have only a Latin Bible.

Wyclif was not what we should call a Protestant. To the time of his death he considered himself a faithful Roman Catholic. He was simply seeking to purify the church from its abuses, and bring it back to the New Testament ideal. In so doing he came into conflict with a corrupt hierarchy. They had power and influence enough to have him removed from his place at the University of Oxford, and he himself became a "poor parson of a town"—the town of Lutterworth. Nothing could have been better for his enduring influence. He turned from the universities and the priesthood to the people. He made all England his parish. The numerous tracts which he issued in the language of the common people have been already referred to.\* As he then wrote directly to and for the people, he was training himself in the language of the people. Their words and forms of speech were becoming natural to him.

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\* "*Chaucerian English*," ch. 5, p. 148.

He was learning to think not in Latin, as in his university days, but in English.

In his controversy with the ecclesiastical authorities he had come to see how many of the evils and errors he attacked had arisen from neglect or perversion of the teaching of the Scriptures. He saw the need of a power greater than his own writings or sermons, or the preaching of his earnest disciples, whom their enemies called "Lollards." The people must themselves have the Scriptures, and not depend upon the teaching of any man, priest or layman. This was well, for many of the theories of Wyclif himself were such as thoughtful Christian men of later times have not been able to accept. It is fortunate that he did not found a Wyclifite church. But he was great enough to go beyond himself. He saw clearly the narrow limit of one man's working life, especially in that day of persecution. He calmly writes, "*Ut sim combustione vel alia morte extinctus,*" "That I may die by fire or by other form of death." He must give England the Bible to read. So, in his quiet rectory of Lutterworth, with a few trusted assistants, this proscribed man, this busy pastor, set himself to render the whole Bible into the language of the common people of England. How much of this work was done by his own hand it is of course impossible to ascertain, but all was under his own supervision. Soon after his death his curate and assistant in translation, John Purvey, issued (in 1388) a revision of the work in the en-

deavor to make the English more idiomatic, and certainly succeeded in improving the style at many points, as Wyclif himself might have done had he lived to have the opportunity. But whether as first issued by him or as thus amended, the translation remains Wyclif's Bible and his own noblest monument, the first rendering of the entire Christian Scriptures into the English tongue.

The date was long before the invention of the art of printing, nearly one hundred years before the introduction of printing into England, so that every copy of the Wyclif version had to be laboriously transcribed by hand, and the Bible was very expensive. Some authorities give the cost of a complete copy as thirty pounds, or \$150, then equivalent to a much larger sum of modern money. Others make a Bible equal in value to "a load of hay." The difference in price was doubtless due to the difference in the quality of manuscripts, those of costly material, with illuminated capitals, etc., being very expensive, while smaller copies on ordinary material were comparatively cheap. Yet even the expense of "a load of hay" would be considerable for the farmer or workingman. Nevertheless, such prices were freely paid, and we find, also, that arrangements were made among the people to pay a stipulated sum for the loan of the precious volume one hour a day. There was a kind of circulating library for the Bible. The extended circulation of the book is shown also by the rigorous measures enforced for

its suppression. During the repeated persecutions any copy that could be found was promptly burnt. Wyclif's Bible was not printed until 1850, when 170 manuscripts which had survived the centuries were carefully collected and compared. It is considered remarkable that, in spite of the organized system of destruction, so many as 170 manuscripts should have survived 500 years,—a fact showing how widely circulated the volume must once have been. Of these manuscripts only a few are such as would have been used by the wealthy. "The large majority are of pocket size, and were obviously intended for common folk and for daily use."

As a specimen of the style of this first English version of the Scriptures we may give the translation of the *Parable of the Sower*:

WYCLIF'S TRANSLATION—*Matthew xiii, 1-9.*\*

1. In that day Jhesus going out of the hous, sat besidis the see.
2. And manye cumpanyes of peple ben gadrid to hym, so that he steying vp in a boot sat; and al the cumpayne stode in the brynde.
3. And he spak to hem many thingis in parablis, seiyinge, Loo! he that sowith goth out to sowe his seed.
4. And the while he soweth, sum felden beside the weye, and briddes of the eyre camen, and eeten hem.
5. Sothely other *seedis* felden into stoony placis, wher thei hadden nat moche erthe; and anon thei ben sprungen up, for thei hadde nat depnesse of erthe.
6. Sothely the sunne sprung up, thei swaliden, or *brenden* for *hete*, and for thei hadden nat roote, thei drieden vp.

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\* From the edition of Forshall and Madden, Oxford, 1850.  
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7. Forsothe other seedis felden amonge thornis; and the thornis wexen vp, and strangliden hem.
8. But other seedis felden in to good lond, and zaven fruyt; sume an hundred fold, another sexti fold, another thrittii fold.
9. He that hath eris of heerynge, heere he.

It will be found interesting to compare this with the Anglo-Saxon version previously given of the same text. For instance, in verse 2, the Anglo-Saxon has *maenigeo*, a “gathering of many,” where Wyclif uses the word derived from the Latin through the Norman-French, *cumpanyes*, or “companies”; again, in verse 3, the Anglo-Saxon has *big-spellum*, “by-stories,” i. e., stories with a side meaning; for which Wyclif uses the term derived from the Greek through the Latin, *parablis*, our “parables.”

The following specimens may well be added:

#### WYCLIF'S BIBLE—*Genesis i, 1.*

“In the first made God of nought heaven and earth. The earth, forsooth, was vain within and void, and darknessis weren upon the face of the see. And the spirit of God was born upon the waters. And God said, Be made light, and made is light. And God saw light that it was good, and divided light fro darkness, and clepide light day and darkness night. And made is even and morn one day.”

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER—*Matthew vi.*

“Our Fadir that art in heuenes, halwid be thi name, thi kingdom come to, be thi wille done, as in heven, so in earth; gif to us this day oure breed or other substance;

and forgeue to us oure dettis as we forgeue to our detours, and leede us not into temptacioun, but deliuere us from yuel."

(It is to be noted that, before 1580, the letters *u* and *v* and also *i* and *j* were continually and freely interchanged.)

Wyclif's Bible, as the selections above given show, can still be read without great difficulty to-day, though occasionally an obsolete word must be looked up, and the whole style seems quaint and queer, especially in its antiquated spelling. As remarked in the case of Chaucer,\* much of this difficulty will be removed by reading aloud, when many forms sound natural and familiar that look strange and uncouth on the printed page.

From the manuscript Bible of Wyclif (1384-1388) to the printed New Testament of Tyndale (1526), we pass over a period of almost a century and a half. Wonderful things had happened in that hundred and fifty years. The revival of learning had come upon the nations,—often called the Renaissance, or new birth of civilization. Of this one author writes:

"Contrasted with medievalism, the Renaissance is like a bright, fresh morning after a close and sultry night. It represents the change in men's views from asceticism to freedom and humanity; from the monastery to the college; from a civilization based on feudalism, and educated by the Latin church, to a civilization educated by science,

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\* "Chaucer," ch. 6, p. 173.

and based, within the restrictions of nationality, on a spiritual intercommunity of ideas and interests.

"In the wake of the literary revival by which this great movement was ushered in, there arose that wonderful spirit of adventure and of maritime discovery under whose influence the borders of the earth were pushed back and the edifice of patristic geography shattered to pieces. In 1492, Columbus, with the aid of the mariners' compass, discovered the New World. In 1497 Vasco de Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope. In 1520 Magellan circumnavigated the globe. The year 1543 is the year of the death of Copernicus, whose reading of the riddle of the sky was soon to revolutionize the whole science of astronomy, and with it man's ideas of his physical position in the universe."

The discovery of printing had come in; and about 1476 Caxton had set up his press at Westminster, which multiplied copies of books, and, by using the style of English adopted by Chaucer and Wyclif, exerted a vast influence toward making that the recognized and permanent form of the English language.

Meanwhile what seemed at the time the vast misfortune of the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, in 1453, had driven the Greeks, with their grand language—the language of the New Testament—and their choice stores of ancient learning, all over Europe. The study of Greek was taken up at Oxford as at all other leading universities of the western world. Erasmus, that easy-going reformer who did so much more than he meant to do, published his edition of the Greek Testament, imperfect in many ways, yet enabling scholars to go back to

the very words of the Apostles, instead of reading them only as translated in the Latin Vulgate. But that period had been almost an absolute blank in English literature. Creative power seems to have expired at the death of Chaucer. The disturbed conditions under Henry IV were unfavorable to literature, and the fierce persecutions of the followers of Wyclif, the so-called Lollards, both by him and his son, tended to repress that freedom of thought without which literature never flourishes. The successful attempt under Henry V to win, and the vain attempt under Henry VI to hold, the conquest of France, were a drain upon the resources and the energies of England up to the middle of the fifteenth century, when the devastating Wars of the Roses began, lasting till near its close. When these civil contests were ended at the accession of the house of Tudor under Henry VII, the mentality of the nation seems to have settled into the apathy of exhaustion, well content to rest and trade and repair the waste of war. Intellectually England had not awakened to the Renaissance.

The New Testament of Tyndale (1526) is the first live thing in the new literature after Chaucer's day,—the first that rises above the level of the commonplace. Spenser and Sidney were not yet born. More's "Utopia," written in Latin in 1516, was not put into English until 1551. The commonplace had, indeed, done valuable service. Through the various publications of Caxton's press; through translations

from the French and Italian by men who had no originality; through the communication of trade, statesmanship and war; through the sermons of faithful divines, and through the widely circulated controversial tracts, often bitter, but always vigorous, had been evolved a new type of English speech, strong, vigorous, simple and above all things practical, ready for noble use whenever a genius should appear to test its power.

William Tyndale was a linguistic genius. Born in Gloucestershire sometime between 1490 and 1495, he entered Oxford in 1510 and then took his degree of Master of Arts in 1515. He removed to Cambridge, where Erasmus had helped to establish a reputation for Greek and theology. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1521, and became for two years a private chaplain and domestic tutor in a private family of Gloucestershire, preaching at intervals in various villages and at Bristol. Whence and how did he gain his wonderful erudition in those thirteen years? He was soon recognized as a man of profound scholarship. It was said of him by one of the foremost scholars of his day that he was "so skilled in seven languages—Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Spanish and English—that whichever he spoke you would suppose it to be his native tongue." "He had a pure and reverent heart; he was a sound scholar; and he was endowed with that rare natural gift, a delicate sense of language." Withal he had gained a mastery of the then half-

formed English style, so that he could not only use it effectively but lift it to a height of power and beauty that it had never known before. How rare such an attainment is every student of linguistic works knows well, for masters of foreign languages are commonly most forlorn and helpless in using their own. The only man to be compared with Tyndale in such achievement is that missionary of three centuries later, William Carey, who learned languages on the cobbler's bench and in a humble parsonage, and who before his death had translated the entire Bible, or portions of it, into forty languages and dialects of India, besides preparing grammars and dictionaries in various languages and dialects.

With this innate endowment is to be remarked Tyndale's sublime confidence that he could give England the entire Bible in the English tongue if but allowed the opportunity. It was while but a private chaplain that in a dispute with a hostile critic he uttered the memorable words, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause that a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost." There was his ideal,—a people's Bible, in the people's English, to be understood by the "boy that driveth the plow." He had no doubt of his ability to do this. To him apparently nothing seemed easier, "if," as he said, "God spare my life," than to render into English—whether from the Hebrew or the Greek it mattered not—first one book

of the Bible, then another and another, till all was done. The work of genius always seems simple and natural to the man who does it. Others are left to wonder at it. Tyndale's genius was concentrated upon a single object. Somehow there had come to him the conviction that his lifework was to give to the English people the Scriptures in their own tongue. It was perhaps by his intense religious earnestness acting upon his conscious ability as a translator. Once formed, his purpose was unchangeable, unbreakable.

In 1523 he gave up his chaplaincy and went to London, hoping to secure the aid and patronage of the great authorities of the church for the work he had undertaken. He was, however, very coldly received. The church as a body was not ready to make, or even to welcome, a new version of the Scriptures. Tyndale lived on for a year in the metropolis in poverty and hardship, till he came definitely to understand that no English churchman would favor, and that no English printer would dare to publish, his Bible. "I understood," he says, "that not only was there no place in my Lord (Bishop) of London's palace to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England."

Here a self-seeking or a timid man would have stopped. Tyndale, however, was a man of different mold. He deeply believed that the Bible was the very Word of God necessary to make men wise unto

salvation. He had the learning and ability to make the translation, and to that sacred work he was willing to give his life, either through toilsome years or by a martyr's death. This quiet scholar had a hero's courage. Indomitable as Wyclif before him, he decided to face the sorrows, hardships and dangers of exile that he might send back an English Bible to the land to which he could not return. In the year 1524 he left London for Hamburg. In 1525 his New Testament was ready for the printers, and he went to the cathedral city of Cologne to see it through the press. But even here he was not safe. A spy discovered that the crime of printing an English New Testament was in progress in the German city, and the lone exile was obliged to pack up his manuscripts and printed sheets and flee with all haste. He was so fortunate as to arrive safely at Worms, where four years previously, in 1521, Martin Luther, in the face of the assembled dignitaries of church and state and of the young and arrogant emperor, Charles V, had made his renowned declaration of religious independence. Germany had risen to new life at Luther's appeal, and the city of Worms was now strongly Lutheran. Here, at last, in the year 1526, three thousand copies of the English New Testament were printed.

The following extract from Tyndale's translation of the Parable of the Sower (*Matt. xiii, 1-9*) may be compared with Wyclif's translation (p. 193) and with the Anglo-Saxon Version of the Gospels (p. 186).

1. The same daye went Jesus out off the housse, and sat by the see syde.
2. And moch people resorted unto him, so gretly that he went and sat in a shyppe, and all the people stode on the shoore.
3. And he spake many thyngs to them in similituds, sayinge: Beholde the sower went forth to sowe;
4. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayes syde, and the fowlis cam and devoured it uppe.
5. Some fell upon stony grounde, where it had not moche erth, and a non it spronge vppe, because it had no deph off erth.
6. And when the sun was vppe, hit cauth heet, and for lake off rotynge wyddred awaye.
7. Some fell amone thornes, and the thornes arose and chooked it.
8. Parte fell in goode grunde, and brought forth good frute: some an hundred fold, some fifty fold, some thyrtie folde.
9. Whosoever hath eares to heare, let him heare.

—From Facsimile by Francis Fry, F. S. A., Bristol, 1862.

The remainder of Tyndale's life may be briefly told. In the ten years following the publication of his New Testament he published, in 1530, a translation of the Pentateuch and completed the translation of the historical books of the Old Testament from Joshua to Second Chronicles, which, however, he did not live to publish. He also completed and published in 1534 a corrected edition of his New Testament, which, by the minute examination and care required, must have been a very laborious work. He was still busily engaged in his work upon the Old Testament when, in the year 1535, he was treacherously enticed into the power of his enemies.

taken to the castle of Vilvoord, in the neighborhood of Brussels, and kept a prisoner till 1536, when he was strangled and his body burnt at the stake. His last recorded words at his martyrdom were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes!" He had given his very life to give England the Bible—"faithful unto death."

Tyndale's work had been intensely individual. Wyclif had, in a manner, been driven into his translation as the natural outcome of the great controversy in which he had become involved. But Tyndale was engaged in no contest, attacked by no one—a young man practically unknown, sustained or encouraged by no one, representing no sect, party or school; he saw what he deemed a great work to be done; he believed that he could do it, and put his life and all that makes life dear into the vast and perilous task.

The event proved that nothing could have been more fortunate than the concentration of one great personality upon that work, which thus became not a patchwork but a unity. What Bacon did for modern science, Tyndale did for the English Scriptures.

He had not completed the translation of the entire Bible before his death, but, as we say in modern phrase, he had "set the pace":—he had created the style and established the model according to which all the remaining work must be made, and was made, to conform. It is said of him:

"For felicity of diction and dignity of rhythm, Tyndale never has been and never can be surpassed. The conception of the Bible as the people's book came down to him from Wyclif, but his splendid embodiment of that conception in the popular English of his own day is the work of his individual genius. His problem was a difficult one. The language of the common people must be used, so that, according to his own early ideal, it might be read and understood by 'a boy that driveth the plow.' Yet the nobility, dignity and majesty of his great originals must not be sacrificed. In combining these important elements he succeeded so well that, far from lowering his standard of language down to the popular level, he lifted the common language in a true nobility of homeliness up to the sublime level of the Bible."

Regarding Tyndale's achievement the historian Froude remarks :

"Of the translation itself, though since that time it has been many times revised and altered, we may say that it is substantially the Bible with which we are familiar. The peculiar genius—if such a word may be permitted—which breathes through it, the mingled tenderness and majesty, the Saxon simplicity, the preternatural grandeur, unequalled, unapproached, in the attempted improvements of modern scholars,—all are here, and bear the impress of the mind of one man, William Tyndale."

Jusserand says of him :\*

"Except in his marginal glosses, often marred by party spirit, by abuse and insults, Tyndale wrote in a sober and dignified style, free from flowers of speech, conceits, and pedantry; he set the example, and his successors, including the authors of the so-called Authorized Version, followed it. His veneration for the sacred text and his trust in the powers of his native tongue upheld him in

\* "A Literary History of the English People," vol. i, p. 205.

his task; 'for,' said he, 'the Greke tongue agreeth moare with the English then with the Latyne. And the propirties of the Hebrue tonge agreeth a thousande tymes moare with the English then with the Latyne. The manner of speakyng is both one, so yt in a thousande places thou neadest not but to translate it in to the English worde for worde.' "

Tyndale was the first to translate the Scriptures from the original Hebrew of the Old and Greek of the New Testament. Wyclif had been compelled to make his translation from the Latin, the one text available in his time; but the Renaissance had put into Tyndale's hand the Hebrew and Greek originals. He was so thorough a scholar as to read them easily, and conformed to them with scrupulous care. Thus he was original, following an untrodden path.

Yet his originality was too real for self-conceit. He was great enough to see the nobility and excellence of Wyclif's version, and kept its substance, while supplying its defects, correcting its errors and retouching all, so that the grand language of the earlier time came forth remolded into the living English of his own day. Hence it is, probably, that the diction of Tyndale's Bible and of the succeeding versions founded upon it is so predominantly Anglo-Saxon. Yet Tyndale was scholar enough and independent enough to use freely the words of Latin or Greek derivation which in his day had become an accepted part of English speech, and in his diction these are so deftly interwoven with the older language that we never think of them except when we

stop to analyze, while yet they contribute to the beauty, the rhythm and even to the simplicity of the composite speech.

"Tyndale is merely a full-grown Wycliffe, and his recension of the New Testament is just what his great predecessor would have made it, had he awaked again to see the full dawn of that glorious day of which his own life and labors kindled the morning twilight. Not only does Tyndale retain the general grammatical structure of the older version, but most of its felicitous verbal combinations; and, what is more remarkable, he preserves even the rhythmic flow of its periods, which is again repeated in the recension of 1611. Wycliffe, then, must be considered as having originated the diction and phraseology which for five centuries have constituted the consecrated dialect of the English speech; and Tyndale, as having given to it that finish and perfection which have so admirably adapted it to the expression of religious doctrine and sentiment, and to the narration of the remarkable series of historical facts which are recorded in the Christian Scriptures."

—MARSH, "*Lectures on the English Language*," ch. 28,  
p. 537.

There had been no apparent demand for an English Bible except in the soul of this adventurous translator. But, once the book was made, the demand appeared overwhelming. English public sentiment, half-tamed by persecution and by the Tudor despotism, was resting like the waters of a great reservoir, placid on the surface but ready, when some daring hand should break the edge of the dam, to pour over in resistless flood through an ever-widening channel. It is stated that not less than

fifty thousand copies of Tyndale's translation were issued from the press before his death. How greedily they were received in England is shown by the strenuous governmental endeavors for their suppression. Even before the printing of the first edition was completed, a hostile prelate of Frankfort warned Henry VIII and Wolsey to watch the English ports to exclude its importation, so that the volumes were to be seized as contraband at any English custom-house. But they were smuggled in, hidden in bales of merchandise and by other devices, in great numbers, as appears from the relentless industry by which they were seized and burned wherever found. Agents were even appointed to buy up copies on the Continent and burn them there, so that they should by no possibility ever reach England. All this proved the eager demand for such a work.

When, in 1529, the mighty prime minister, Cardinal Wolsey, fell, Thomas Cromwell, an ambitious, cold-blooded politician, without religion or principle, rose to power in his stead. Then, when in 1531-1532, Henry definitely broke with the papacy and proclaimed himself supreme head of the Church of England, Cromwell reasoned that it would be a good thing to have an English Bible in circulation in order to emphasize and make permanent the rupture with the papacy, on which he had staked his whole political future; also, that it would be a popular measure to give the people what they so evidently

wanted. Hence this irreligious politician determined that the English people should have a Bible under the protection of the government. Then translation swiftly followed translation.

Cromwell could not use Tyndale's version because Tyndale had overloaded his Bible with explanatory notes and argumentative prefaces which were often bitterly controversial and, above all,<sup>1</sup> strongly Lutheran. Henry VIII, who had issued a royal tract against Luther, for which the Pope had given the monarch the title of "Defender of the Faith"—a title which the sovereigns of England still proudly bear—still retained, after his break with the Pope, his hatred of Lutheranism, and therefore fiercely detested Tyndale's Bible. To meet this difficulty, a good, faithful, industrious man was found, who made in Antwerp what appeared to be a new translation. Coverdale used Tyndale's version, so far as that was completed, as the basis of his own work. For the unfinished portions he could not, like Tyndale, translate direct from the Hebrew and the Greek, but used the best Latin and German translations he could procure. He did not work under poverty and persecution, but with the approval of the English government and supplied with sufficient means. So, in comparative ease and comfort, he finished the first complete English translation of the Scriptures of that day.

Coverdale was a master of felicitous English. It is said of him that he "was of a delicate and

susceptible temperament, endowed in an exceptional degree with the feeling for rhythm, and with an instinct for whatever is beautiful and tender in language." Through his own translation and others which he assisted in editing, he has had a great influence upon the style of our authorized version. His version of the Psalms is that used in the Book of Common Prayer, which was compiled under the reign of Edward VI (1549-1552). Coverdale's Bible, which was in black letter, and of small folio size, and bearing a dedication to the king, reached England in 1535 and began to be circulated with the royal approval while Tyndale was a prisoner, about a year before his death. Coverdale omitted many of Tyndale's prefaces and notes. Thus his translation, while, on the whole, inferior to Tyndale's, could be freely circulated, while Tyndale's could not.

Soon appeared yet another version, known as Matthew's Bible. This was really the work of John Rogers, an eminent clergyman and scholar, who won melancholy fame as the first martyr to perish at the stake under the persecution of Queen Mary Tudor, a few years later. Rogers had been the disciple and friend of Tyndale, who had appointed him his literary executor. As it was not safe to publish the book in his own name, it was issued in the name of Thomas Matthew, and is known as Matthew's Bible, though at several points the initials J. R. appear.

This book reached England in 1537, was approved by Archbishop Cranmer, and licensed by the king, who at the same time gave his formal approval to Coverdale's translation, which had already been for two years in unhindered circulation. Matthew's Bible was in fact Tyndale's Bible, with part of the notes omitted, and the lacking portions of the text supplied from Coverdale's version. Thus within two years of Tyndale's death, two Bibles, virtually reproducing his own, were circulating in England under the authority of the king. Matthew's Bible speedily superseded Coverdale's because it had more of the vigor and spiritual earnestness of Tyndale's devout heart and masterful mind. It is remarked by scholars that "the chief interest of the Matthew's Bible lies in the fact that it forms the real basis of all later revisions," thus justifying the claim already stated that Tyndale's version is substantially the foundation of the English Bible which we have to-day.

Still a new version, however, was now at hand. Cromwell, the resourceful prime minister, was aware of a hidden danger. Matthew's Bible, while it had eliminated much, had yet retained a portion of the controversial matter of Tyndale's own translation. The Protestant scholars of that day unconsciously retained a leaven of the idea that the common people could not be trusted to read the Scriptures without note or comment. So they sought, by notes and explanations, to keep them from straying away

from the truth. What if some zealous ecclesiastic should call the king's attention to these notes and prefaces full of "Lutheranism," which Henry so detested? What if the prime minister should suddenly be called to account by his zealous and hot-tempered sovereign for the circulation of such doctrines within his realm?

To guard against this danger, the wily politician devised a magnificent scheme that would appeal to that love of pomp and splendor which had led King Henry to parade himself and his knights in France on the famous Field of the Cloth of Gold. He would issue a new Bible on a splendid scale, sure to command the royal favor. He would take charge of the publication himself, and take care that the most zealous theologian should not incorporate in it one objectionable note. Such was the origin of the "Great Bible," a truly magnificent work. As England had no presses or workmen equal to so grand an undertaking, Coverdale was sent to Paris, amply supplied with authority and funds for all the expenditure needed, and sustained by the royal license of the French monarch, Francis I. One difficulty, however, even the Prime Minister of England could not guard against. The dreaded Inquisition was then supreme in Paris. The editors and translators worked in daily dread of that formidable and pitiless tribunal. Once again devout men had to print the Scriptures as if they were committing a crime. When the work was far advanced, Cover-

dale, as if some premonition had come to him, took advantage of the British ambassador to England, and of the vital fact that an ambassador's baggage could not be searched at the frontier, and sent the sheets already completed safely packed in the travelling cases of the minister plenipotentiary. Scarcely had he done so when the officers of the Inquisition descended upon the printing office. They seized a quantity of sheets yet remaining, but the cupidity of one official led him to sell these by the pound for waste paper, "four great dry-vats full," and the watchful Coverdale bought up the mass and contrived to ship these also to England. Then Cromwell, with the royal treasury under his hand, sent over to Paris and bought the entire printing outfit, type and presses bodily, and transported them to England, and easily hired some of the best of the French printers to cross to London and complete the work.

The splendid volume was issued in 1539, with a full page frontispiece by the world-famous artist, Hans Holbein, representing King Henry VIII on his throne in robes of state, the Lord and his angels bending over him from above, church dignitaries kneeling around him, as he presented the sacred volume, while the common people thronged around, with scrolls issuing from their mouths, some inscribed "*Vivat Rex!*" and others, in plain English, "God save the King!" Of the orthodoxy of such a book the king could not have a moment's doubt.

Just in advance of its publication Cromwell had artfully procured an innocent-appearing royal order requiring all clergymen to provide, before a specified day, "one boke of the whole Bible *in the largest volume*, set up in some convenient place within the church, whereat their parishioners may most conveniently resort to and read the same." It was at once evident that this could be none other than the "Great Bible," often called "Cranmer's Bible," because of Cranmer's preface. This privilege was instantly and highly appreciated by the people, some churches being obliged to provide several copies—one church, at least, supplying six—to meet the demand. Careful rules had to be adopted for order and mutual consideration in consulting the sacred volume.

"But that which penetrated the imagination and language of England more than any word, lay or ecclesiastical, was the Bible itself, wherein the simple folk, without other books, and open to new emotions, pricked by the reproaches of conscience and the presentiment of the dark future, suddenly looked with awe and trembling upon the face of the eternal King, heard or read the tables of his law, the archives of his vengeance, and with the whole attention of eyes and heart filled themselves with his promises and threats. . . . It was not only a discovery of salvation to the troubled conscience but the revelation of a new literature—the only literature practically accessible to all, and comprising at once legends and annals, war-song and psalm, philosophy and vision. Imagine the effect upon minds essentially unoccupied by any history, romance or poetry, and anxiously alive to the grandeur and terrors which pass before their eyes as

they gather in crowds Sunday after Sunday, day after day, to hear its marvelous accent.

"Many well-disposed people used much to resort to the hearing thereof, especially when they could get anybody that had an audible voice to read to them. . . . One John Porter used sometimes to be occupied in that goodly exercise, to the edifying of himself as well as others. This Porter was a fresh young man and of a big stature; and great multitudes would resort thither to hear him, because he could read well and had an audible voice."

—WELSH, "*Development of English Literature and Language*," ch. 6, p. 326.

Thus within four years after the death of Tyndale, the Great Bible, containing virtually all his work, was set up for public reading in all the churches of England under the authority of the king.

One disappointment came to the careful and studious Coverdale in the matter. He had prepared a store of explanatory notes, and had devised an elaborate apparatus of pointing hands to guide the reader safely to the explanations. These pointing hands still appear in all the early editions, but they point to nothing; for the shrewd Cromwell relentlessly threw out all the notes, that not one theological explanation should appear to get him into trouble. Thus the Great Bible was the first emancipated Bible in the modern English tongue, trusting the people to find out for themselves the true meaning from the sacred page.

But changes now came swiftly. Henry VIII died in 1547, and his son, Edward VI, after a short and

feeble reign of six years, also passed away. Those who are sometimes impatient over the slowness of congresses and other deliberative assemblies, and long for a strong executive to give them in an instant what they happen to want, should hark back to the days of masterful power when freedom of religious worship was unknown and the death of a sovereign could change the religion of a people. Henry's daughter, Mary Tudor, a rigorous Catholic and merciless persecutor, came to the throne. Among many victims, John Rogers and Archbishop Cranmer were burnt at the stake. All Protestants who could escape fled from the deadly island. Numbers of them took refuge in the hospitable Protestant city of Geneva in Switzerland. Are we to suppose that those men sat down in sackcloth and ashes to bewail the desolation of Zion and their own hard fate? By no means. They were men of a different temper. They added to their devotion and faith something of the unbeatable, insubmissile English resilience. They said, "If we can not preach in England, we will send the Bible to England." The "Great Bible," which required to be placed on a shelf in the church, was no longer of use under a Roman Catholic sovereign. They would provide a Bible for the people, small and cheap, easily transported, and within the reach of all. Such was the Geneva Bible, which was issued in 1560. It was not only a small volume but it was printed, not in the old black letter, but in our modern Roman type.

Our familiar division of verses also appears for the first time in English in the Geneva Bible.\*

The publication of the Geneva Bible proved singularly opportune. Queen Elizabeth had come to the throne in 1558. The period of Protestant elation was in full tide. The Bible was once more free in England. There was yet very little English literature. Shakespeare was not yet born. Bacon was in his cradle. The people had been trained by the Great Bible into the habit of Bible-reading. All that they held most dear was connected with this book, and they hailed with joy the cheap, popular Geneva translation, which reached the prodigious number of one hundred and fifty editions.

This popular Bible, however, was liberally provided with notes, giving the views of Calvin and Luther. Hence the church authorities determined to provide a safe translation under their own supervision. They issued, in 1568, the Bishops' Bible, which was highly ecclesiastical and fortified with great names, but costly and cumbersome, feeble in its attempt to avoid controversy, and, withal, not scholarly. Hence it was unable to hold its own against the Geneva Bible, which became the especial favorite of the English Puritans and the Scotch Presbyterians.

During the years from 1582 to 1610 there was

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\* This division had been first made in the Greek Testament by Robert Stephens during a ride between Paris and Lyons. The system of division was afterwards extended to the Old Testament, but now for the first time introduced into an English Bible.

prepared the Roman Catholic translation of the Bible into English, commonly known as the "Douai Bible." Of this version the New International Encyclopedia says:

"The strength of the Reformation movement in England drove many English Catholics to France. At Reims and Douai English colleges were established by these refugees for the purpose of educating young men for the priesthood. In 1582 an English New Testament, with annotations, was published at Reims by John Fogny. The work was completed by the publication of the Old Testament in 1609 at Douai. The English Bible used by Roman Catholics is thus known as the Douai Bible. It is characteristic of this translation that it was made from the Vulgate and not from the Greek and Hebrew originals. This was because of the decree of the Council of Trent making the Vulgate the standard Bible of the Roman church. The Remish Testament of 1582 contains an elaborate preface setting forth the value and proper use of a popular version and defending the accuracy of the following translation. It was a serious, conscientious attempt, hampered, indeed, by a compulsory dependence on the Vulgate, but not altogether blind to the necessity, at times, of falling back on the Greek. Its English is not so idiomatic as that of Tyndale's version. Subsequent editions, such as those of Dr. Challoner (London, 1752), and Dr. MacMahon (Dublin, 1791), and more modern editions of the Douai Bible, show marked improvement over those of 1582 and 1609."

Elizabeth's great reign ended, and James I became king, in 1603. In the midst of a theological conference, it occurred to him that it would be a grand achievement and signalize his reign to make a wholly new translation of the Bible. Fifty-four translators

were summoned—all eminent scholars—but only forty-seven are known to have undertaken the work. They were divided into six companies, two of which met at Cambridge, two at Oxford, and two at Westminster. When a portion was finished by one of the companies it was sent to the others for their examination and criticism, any differences of opinion being referred to a committee. Finally the whole work was revised in London by a special committee consisting of two delegates from each of the six companies.

The first article of the royal instructions required: "The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishops' Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will admit."

From this some have hastily inferred that the King James Bible was nothing but a revision of the Bishops' Bible. But it will be seen that the final clause of the instruction gives a wide latitude: "as little altered as the truth of the original will admit." Who should say what "the truth of the original" would admit? Evidently no one but the revisers. They produced a work very different from the Bishops' Bible. Their aim was, as they themselves expressed it, "to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one." If ever an ideal was attained, it was this. The King James Version is rich with all the best treasures of the previous versions and revisions. It agrees remarkably in general style with the immortal work of

Tyndale, while enriched by the adoption of the most felicitous words and phrases that had been introduced since his day in the various revisions. But the ultimate basis of the work was the text of the Hebrew and Greek originals. Thus they state it on their title-page, as will be seen in any copy of the so-called "Authorized Version,"—"Translated out of the original tongues, and with the former translations diligently compared and revised." They were competent to do this, for we are told that "they were the picked scholars and linguists of their day. They were also men of profound and unaffected piety."

Some will be ready to inquire how the personality of the translator can make any difference. If the words of the original are faithfully rendered into English, must not all translations be alike? The possible difference may be illustrated from the effect of music. Here is a musical composition all written out. Two musicians play that piece of music upon the same piano. Both play correctly, striking every note in its proper order and time, yet the rendering of one is incomparably finer and nobler than that of the other. There is an indescribable something which we call the "touch" of the player, by which his mind and soul are expressed through the notes. Something like this is in the use of language. There are certain personal qualities that would make one man's rendering indescribably better than any other version of the same text. A person of narrow mind

and commonplace activities naturally uses a small range of commonplace words and ready-made combinations of words. They fit well enough such thought as he has. He does not rise above himself in translating. If he attempts to use rich, grand and noble words, he has no conception of their real power or fitting connection, and becomes like a tramp in a stolen dress-suit; in the attempt to be splendid he has made himself ridiculous. All the grammars and dictionaries you can accumulate around such a man will not carry him beyond the range of his own mind, nor lift him above his habitual plane of thought. Personality is as important in translation as in original composition.

It is needless to say that a translator must know the language of the original, but it may also fittingly be said that he must know it well enough to think in it. He must be able to take its idioms whole, and not word by word,—to reach on through great stretches of thought, and coordinate beginning, middle, and end. This, also, was these men's ideal. Thus Purvey, in the prolog to his revision of Wyclif's translation (1388), writes:

"First it is to knowe (to be known) that the best translating is out of Latyn into English, to translate aftir the sentence (*i. e.*, the *sense*), and not oneli aftir the wordis, so that the sentence be as opin, either openere, in English as in Latyn, and not go fer fro the lettre."

That is to say, the translator must make not merely the words but the thought of the foreign

author so thoroughly his own that he can think it out into words in his own language, just as if it had originated in his own mind.

One who will read their own account of the work these early translators did soon comes to feel that their scholarship was as intense as their devotion. They were not merely good men but scholars who were easily masters of the languages from which they translated,—the Latin of Wyclif's day, and the Hebrew and Greek of Tyndale's. The translator from a foreign language into his native tongue must know his own. From time to time some expert in French, German or Italian translates a foreign masterpiece into such execrable English that we wonder how the original ever came to be admired. Slavery to the foreign idiom has destroyed the translator's mastery of his own. Many Latinisms were thus carried over in the early Wyclif Version, but these were largely corrected in their revision. Tyndale's style is almost wholly free from them because of his rare mastery of felicitous English. Coverdale, with less skill in foreign languages, largely shared Tyndale's mastery of his own.

This gift of expression, often called the sense of language, is like quick perception of color or form, largely a native endowment. Among the many synonyms of speech, one person infallibly selects, for reasons that it might puzzle him at the moment to explain, the very word fullest of deep or hidden meaning, richest in association of lofty or

tender feeling, fittest in significance, tone, or rhythm for the thought then and there to be expressed. Such was the gift of the self-educated statesman, Abraham Lincoln. It has been remarked that wherever he interlined corrections in the state papers of the cultured Seward, the change is in every case an improvement. But this native power can be indefinitely increased by culture and training. Such a mind, when thoroughly trained, comes to have a vast assemblage of words from every department of human thought, and among these it pounces by instinct upon the one that the occasion demands. This is to know one's native tongue.

The English Bible is full of passages where the very word of words has been chosen, and no other could be substituted without loss.

Begin with the first chapter of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." That fills the mind full, and brings a pause to grasp the greatness of the thought. Then follow the story down, not worrying about geology. View it, if you will, as an impressionist picture, or as an inspired vision, without too minute study of details, and it is the story of a grand march from chaos to a habitable earth and human dominion, wrought by the all-powerful word of God. In the vastness and majesty of the view small items are neglected:

"And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so."

What is the lapse of a million or more years when Omnipotence is fulfilling the purpose of the Eternal? The English words that tell the story bring before the reader of the twentieth century the vision of the ancient seer in all its majestic simplicity, till the mind rests with the closing utterance:

“And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.”

For narrative, follow the life of Abraham, the pastoral chieftain; the wooing of Rebecca for Isaac's bride,—a tale of a far-off time and a different civilization, where yet the English adapts itself to the eastern customs of ancient days, so that the story is Oriental still, and the women with their water-pots and the camels move naturally across the scene; next of Jacob's overreaching of his reckless brother; then of his own lonely journey to seek his fortune afar, and, as he slept on a pillow of stone in the wilderness, he saw the angel-thronged ladder reaching up to heaven; of his winning of Rachel, where his seven years of service “seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had to her”; the immortal story of Joseph, fresh and winning to our children to-day; of the battles and hair-breadth escapes of David's adventurous life; of the tender, manly, warrior friendship of David and Jonathan; of Ruth, at once so womanly, so loving, so gentle and so strong; of Elijah, appearing suddenly, as if from the invisible world, commanding the people

and withstanding the king in Jehovah's name, till "there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven"; of Nehemiah, the patriot statesman, seeking Jerusalem because it was desolate, and building it up for Israel's new home; then the ever-new stories of the Gospels; of the conversion of the Apostle Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, and of his shipwreck, where we seem to look into the faces of the terror-stricken company and to hear the roar of the stormy sea, then to behold the Christian leader standing forth with his message of hope,

"For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve."—*Acts xxvii, 23.*

The flexible, abundant English proves itself at home in every scene. For exultant joy and trust, read Israel's song of triumph on the Red Sea's farther shore:

"Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my fathers' God, and I will exalt him. . . .

Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation."—*Exodus vx, 1-2, 13.*

Or David's joyous utterance in the eighteenth Psalm:

"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.

The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;

my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.

As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him."

For expression of grief turn to David's Lament over Saul and Jonathan:

"The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love for me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"—*II Samuel i, 19, 26.*

As an utterance of sorrow for sin, read the Penitential Psalm (the fifty-first):

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight:

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

For the anguish of national disaster, turn to the Lamentations of Jeremiah:

"How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people!

how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations!

She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her:

And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me."

Descriptions of the beauty and wonder of nature are unsurpassed.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.—*Psalm xix.*

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained:

What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?"—*Psalm viii, 3-4.*

Read the sixty-fifth Psalm, the one hundred and third, the one hundred and fourth, and that joyous outburst of praise from all nature in the one hundred and forty-eighth, all which we may not quote. Note the scattered images: how "the floods clap their hands and the hills are joyful together"; how "the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high"; how "the pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy; they also sing."

For description of the divine majesty, read that great chapter of Isaiah (the fortieth) that begins,

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God":

"Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?

Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

Lift up your eyes on High, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power."

The language that is so facile in narrative is mighty, splendid, majestic in description. Where can we parallel its sublimity?

It would be vain to attempt to assemble adequate examples of beauty and power in all departments of thought and utterance from this great treasury of English expression. Let us merely add a few detached passages, each of which will repay study and analysis, as a representation of noble English style.

Note the words which Cromwell recited, as he rode slowly to the attack in the early morning of the victorious battle of Dunbar:

"Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.

As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax

melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice."—*Psalm lxviii, 1-3.*

Then, in the midst of the warnings of that prophet whose name has become a synonym for lament or denunciation, read these words of comfort:

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

And ye shall seek me, and shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."—*Jeremiah xxix, 11, 14.*

"Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity: and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid."—*Jeremiah xxx, 10-11.*

It is worth observing in the two selections last given how simple are the words. Only two—*dismayed* and *captivity*—are out of the ordinary. The rest are for the most part such as a child might use. Yet in their combinations what an effect is attained of mingled power and beauty.

Study the following without note or comment:

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."—*Isaiah xxxii, 17.*

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."—*James iii, 17-18.*

"In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. . . .

In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee."—*Isaiah liv, 8, 14.*

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."—*Isaiah xxxv, 1, 9-10.*

For a service of consecration read Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (*I Kings, viii, 22-53*).

For majestic visions, study the book of Daniel and the Apocalypse, not now concerning yourself with any theory or system of interpretation, but taking just what you find on the printed page. Read, for instance, the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the fourth chapter of Daniel, the dream worthy of a king,—of the world-overshadowing tree; of the "watcher and the holy one" coming down from heaven with the decree:

"Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field."

Then follow the interpretation of the statesman-prophet, and its fulfilment in the misfortune and restoration of the king, with his own devout yet triumphant utterance at the close (verses 34-37), when the long-lingered shadow of insanity had passed:

"At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: . . . .

At the same time my reason returned unto me . . . . and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

For the hope of the life eternal, how beautiful the closing chapters of the Apocalypse:

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

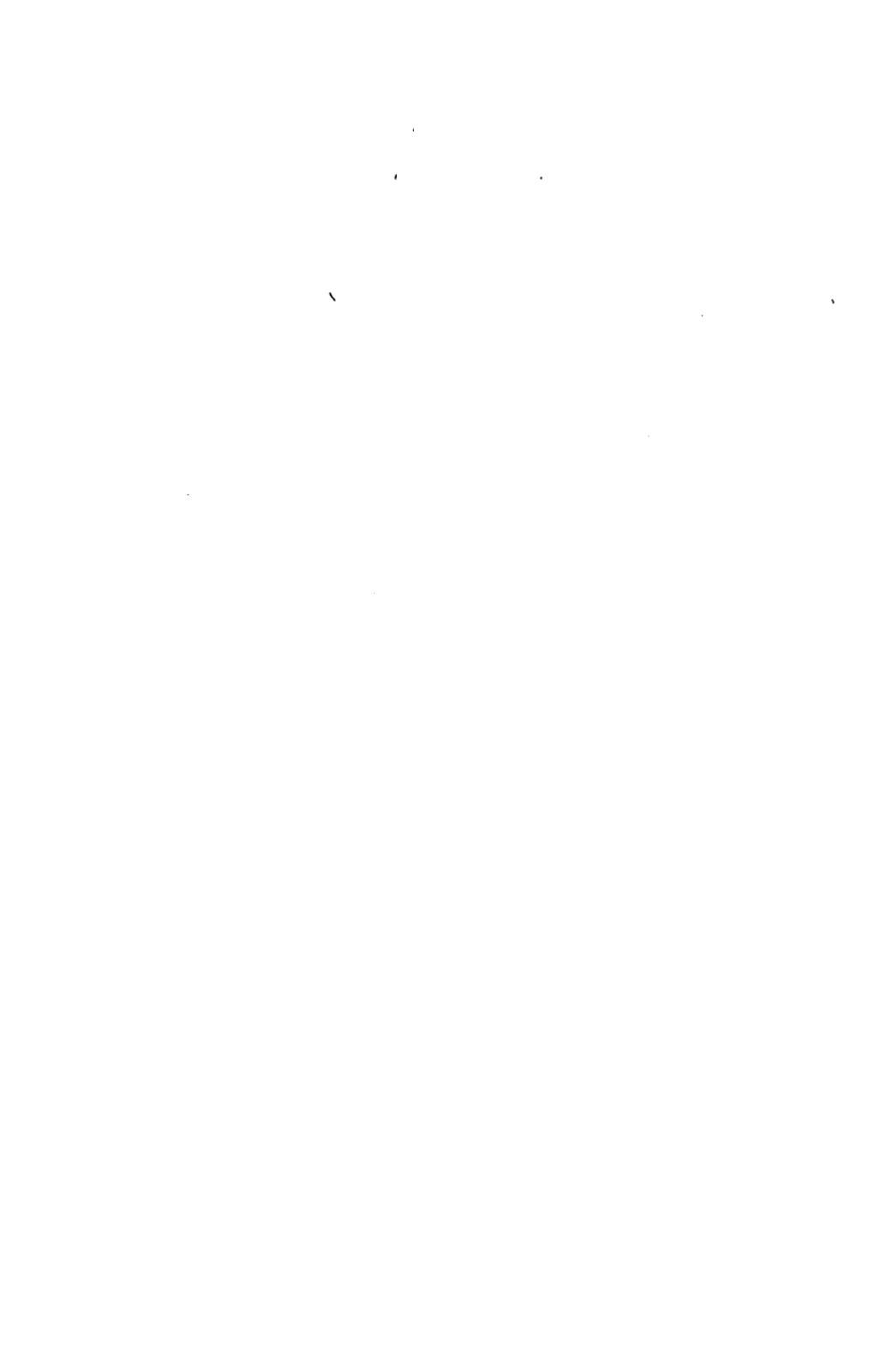
And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.

And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there . . . . and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever and ever."



VIII

**ENGLISH ETYMOLOGY A HELPFUL  
STUDY**



## VIII

### ENGLISH ETYMOLOGY A HELPFUL STUDY

If we know the actual present meaning of words, the question may be asked, what do we want more? The answer to this question is that to limit ourselves to the actual present meaning is to defraud ourselves of thousands of years of history; to efface the great background against which the current meaning of words comes out into fullest relief. We are "heirs of all the ages," our words coming to us from the ancient Sanskrit and the Hebrew, from the classic Greek and Latin, from the wild shores of the North Sea, the Danish and Scandinavian peoples, from the songs of the troubadours and the buccaneers of Spain and the Indians of our own country. A man is more to us, whether he is a great public leader or an ordinary acquaintance, when we know something of his past life. The same is true even in a novel or a play. The novelist or the playwright takes upon himself to set before us the past history of each prominent actor, so that we associate him with what he has been. Our idea of words likewise will become more vivid, and our choice will be correspondingly more sure, when we know what is behind each word. Take, for instance, the well-known word *miser*—one who stinted or

starves himself to accumulate money, which for him might just as well be piled-up sand. The word means more to us when we know that it is the Latin *miser*, meaning "wretched," the word from which our *miserable* is derived. The *miser*, then, is one who, to accumulate wealth, subjects himself to all the *misery* of poverty and destitution, making himself *miserable* in order to be rich.

Again, we understand that a *sarcasm* is a cutting or biting remark. But we feel its force more fully when we know that it is from the Greek *sarkazo*, to bite or tear the flesh; from *sarx*, flesh. Sarcasm is a flesh-tearing utterance. The words may be smooth and fair, often complimentary, yet they corrode and rankle whenever recalled, and stick to their victim like the shirt of Nessus burning the flesh of the hero Hercules and, whenever any corner of the fatal garment was torn away, carrying the flesh with it. No violent abuse compares with keen, well-placed *sarcasm*. *Sarcastic* as an adjective carries the same meaning.

*Antipodes* is from the two Greek words, *anti*, meaning against or opposite, and *pous*, foot; and our antipodes are those whose feet are exactly opposite to ours, altho with a few thousand miles of earth between them; so that, if the earth were removed, the soles of their feet would come flat against the soles of ours. That is the idea behind the word when we say that two things are the very *antipodes* of each other.

*Frank*, open, truthful, is from the name of the Germanic people, the “Franks,” who conquered France and founded the French monarchy. They were a great race, a free people, strong enough and brave enough to tell the truth, daring to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. To tell the truth was to be *frank*—was the mark of the free man of that conquering people. A great part of the disgrace and insult that attach to the word *lie* among the Germanic peoples is due to this idea, that lying is the vice of the coward and the slave. This was true of slavery in our own country. It led to cowardice and falsehood.

*Slave* is from Slavonian. The Slavonians were often made captives by the Franks, and so the Slavonian came to be the word for the captive held in bondage, the *slave*.

*Slander* is from the French word *esclandre*, from the Greek *skandalon*, ultimately a stumbling-block, an offense; hence its meaning is the uttering of an offensive or prejudicial report. *Slander* is distinct from *libel*. The uttering of a report unfavorable to a person is *slander*, or in another form it is *scandal*; but the written or printed report is *libel*. *Libel* is from the Latin *libellus*, a little book, denoting primarily the formulated statement of charges required in the ecclesiastical courts. The same idea may be found in the book of Job, where he says, “Oh that my adversary had written a book.” There was nothing that Job could definitely reply to. He

was suffering under no definite charge. If he only had charges formulated, he was so confident of his righteousness that he believed he could answer them, and that is the idea of *libel*, the written charge, definite, formal, capable of being proved or disproved. Knowing that *libel* is from *libellus*, the little book, it is easy to remember that it is the *written* or *printed* report that is the *libel*. The spoken report is *slander*. Now, how does *gossip* differ from *slander* and *libel*? We feel that *gossip* is slighter. *Gossip* is from *God* plus *sib*, *sib* meaning relation or relative, and a *gossip* was a God-relative, a *sponsor* in baptism, a godfather or godmother, hence an intimate companion. A *gossip* is a companion, and the word, as used of speech, signified the talk of intimate friends, who are much together, with the implication that those who talk much with each other will say a great deal to the prejudice of other people; but it is a much slighter word than either *slander* or *libel*. *Gossip* may be harmless—it is apt to be mischievous.

We speak of the *aggregate* as the full total. *Aggregate* is from the Latin *ad*, to, plus *grex*, flock, signifying a flock gathered together, and hence complete, exactly according with our western ranch phrase, the “round-up.” We speak of the “round-up” of cattle when the whole herd is gotten together; that idea applied to a flock of sheep is the *aggregate* in Latin. Opposed to that we have *segregate*, from *se*, aside, and *grex*, flock, to put into a

separate class or group or form, to isolate: that is, to *segregate* is to separate from the mass or the class. Now, how does the word *isolate* get its meaning of separateness? It is from the Italian *isola*, from the Latin *insula*, an island, a separate land, land shut off by water all around it. Thus we speak of the Englishman's *insularity*, as he lives on the "tight little island." That which is *isolated* is shut off, as if on an island. So we "isolate" a case of disease.

There is the word *enormous*, used to denote something very great. Are there any limits to its use? If we have followed its derivation, we find it to come from the Latin *e*, out, plus *norma*, rule. It means "out of rule," unprecedented, unusual; hence, *enormous* has always an unfavorable shade. It is not to be indiscriminately used of whatever is great. The words *vast* or *immense* are often greatly preferable. We speak of an *enormous* price, meaning unusual and probably excessive; but we should not say *enormous* value, for value is supposed to be real. We may say *immense* value. We may say *enormous valuation*, for *valuation* is someone's *estimate of value*, which may be excessive. We do not say that the height of the Washington Monument is *enormous*. We can not apply that word to that beautiful shaft. The dome of the National Capitol is much better described as *vast* than as *enormous*. We may characterize a man as one of *enormous* pretensions, as compared with his performance; but we do not

speak of a man of *enormous* integrity, of *enormous* veracity, though we might say *enormous* voracity. We should say *vast* learning, *vast* erudition. *Immense* (primarily unmeasured) power is better than *enormous* power, unless we mean to imply that the power is excessive or undesirable, as perhaps when referring to "trusts."

*Traveling* under modern appliances has become comparatively easy. We have substituted danger for labor, but the word *travel* originally meant "labor, work," from the French *travail*, and tells of the old time of the foot journey and the post-chaise. The idea is still present in the plantation melody, "Jordan's a hard road to *travel*."

*Accumulate* and *accumulation* have become favorite words; but how much more they mean when we know that *accumulate* is derived from the Latin *cumulus*, a heap, and means to pile up. An *accumulation* is a heap. As we say in common speech of a rich man, "He has made his pile," that is, his *accumulation*.

*Assets* are always very satisfactory, if there are only enough of them. It is interesting to know that *asset* is exactly from the French *assez*, enough, from the Latin *ad*, to, plus *satis*, enough; that is, originally, the *assets* were enough to meet all demands. Now when a concern fails, with liabilities of ten millions and assets of ten cents, we use the word *assets* in a derived sense, meaning not enough but all that the creditors will get. It is interesting

to know that *averse* is from the Latin *a* or *ab*, from, and *verto*, turn, denoting the head instinctively turned away from the thing one does not like, or would not do; so we have the word *avert*, turn away, as estranged friends pass with *averted* face.

When we praise one's *dexterity* we acknowledge the right-handedness of the human race, for *dexterity* or *dextrous* is from the Latin *dexter*, the right hand, what is done with the right hand being for the vast majority of people most neatly and most skilfully done. On the other hand, when we speak of a *sinister* appearance, a *sinister* aspect, we are referring unconsciously to an old Roman superstition. *Sinister*, in Latin, denotes the left hand, and all omens, as the flight of birds, if on the left of the observer, were unfavorable. Hence the unfavorable is the *sinister*. The same superstition survives as to our new moon, and, though we laugh at ourselves, probably most of us feel a little more comfortable if we see the new moon over the right shoulder. The superstition is very old, and the *sinister* aspect, the *sinister* appearance, refers to that unfavorable idea that the Roman attached to whatever appeared or passed on the left.

What is the distinction between *awkward* and *clumsy*? The two words are nearly alike, many times interchangeable. *Awkward* is from *awk*, kindred with *off*, from a Norwegian word, and *awkward* is "offward," turned the wrong way. It was anciently used of a backhanded blow in battle,

which was ordinarily less effective. So it was used of squinting eyes; to be cross-eyed was, and perhaps still is, to be *awkward*. *Clumsy*, on the other hand, is from the Norwegian *clumse*, stiff with cold, as when we say, on a bitter cold morning, "my fingers are all thumbs." One can not work, because the muscles are stiff with cold. Hence *clumsy* refers to condition, while *awkward* refers to action. A man *clumsy* in build is likely, altho not certain, to be *awkward* in action. He may overcome it by training. The finest untrained colt is *awkward* in harness. If the animal is of the right stuff he can be trained out of *awkwardness*; but the *clumsy* plow-horse can never be trained out of *awkwardness*, because the *clumsy* build produces for him the *awkward* action; so we speak of an *awkward* predicament, an *awkward* excuse, always with these meanings.

*Attempt* is from the Latin *ad*, to, and *tento*, try. I will *attempt* means, I will try; and often *attempt* is a trial which fails. Hence *attempt* is always less than *endeavor*. *Endeavor* is continuous, hopes for success, and tries *until* it attains. So we do not have the "Society of Christian *Attempt*," but the "Society of Christian *Endeavor*," from the French *en*, in or to, plus *devoir*, duty, which means far more.

But *contempt* is not parallel with *attempt*. *Contempt*, though the last part is similar in form, is of different derivation. It is from the Latin *con*, with, and *temno*, despise, and *contempt* is a despising.

Take the two words you find frequently in Scripture, the *apostle* and the *disciple*. Jesus called his *disciples*, and out of their number chose twelve *apostles*. Now what is the distinction? *Disciple* is from the Latin *disco*, to learn. The *disciple* was a learner. All who followed Christ were learners, pupils, *disciples*. But the *apostle* is one sent forth, from the Greek *apostello*, from *apo*, forth, and *stello*, send, and he was chosen and qualified as a trusted messenger who could be *sent forth* with the message; hence the apostles were naturally the leaders of the Christian host.

Often we can correct misspellings by attention to etymology. In his recent reading the writer came across this sentence: "He seemed more in harmony with these *straightened* surroundings than his appearance would indicate." The true word is *straitened*, which in this sense is derived from the old French *estreit*, from the Latin *strictus*, drawn together. From the same source we have the noun *strait* for the narrow passage connecting two great bodies of water, as the *Straits* of Gibraltar, Bering *Strait*. It is ultimately from the Latin *stringo*, contract. *Straightened* circumstances are circumstances where your means are narrow and shut you in. Very often if a man could *straighten* his circumstances with a *ght* and make them *straight* he would not be *straitened*. But *straighten* is from the Anglo-Saxon *streccan*, stretch, of which the past participle is *streht* (pronounced *straight*), and that means

"stretched"; so the *straight* line is the stretched line. You see at once that if you draw the line taut it must be *straight*. The taut line has simply one direction, and the *stretched* line is the *straight* line.

It may be interesting to know that the word *rhyme* is ordinarily misspelled in our literature. It is spelled and given in many dictionaries as *rhyme*, but some of the best writers now—and with them the Standard Dictionary—give *rime*. The word *rime* is from the Anglo-Saxon *riman*, from the noun *rim*, number. You know the word *number* is applied to poetry. Pope says, "I lisped in numbers for the *numbers* came." A line, for instance, contains five feet, and you get a certain *number* of syllables. You come to the end of the line, then you start with another line. So poetry, with syllables counted off, was called formerly *numbers*. That is the idea of the Saxon *rime*. Our balancing of similar-sounding syllables is a later signification of *rime*. But the word is *rime*, and the way it comes to be *rhyme* is that in the sixteenth century scholars who did not know etymology, but thought they did, supposed that *rime* should be spelled like *rhythm*. But *rhythm* is from the Greek, while *rime*, as stated above, is from the Anglo-Saxon, and has no connection with *rhythm*. There may be *rhythm* without *rime*, as in blank verse, or *rime* without *rhythm*, as in various kinds of doggerel.

Another word, the origin of which may cause surprize, is the word *tongue*. Its real spelling is

*tung*, from the Anglo-Saxon *tunge*. We have dropped the mute *e* from almost all the Saxon words, and following that analogy we should have *tung*. The Norman-French wanted to make the word like their French words, *longue*, etc., and so they transformed the *tung* into *tongue*. Whether anybody will ever be brave enough to go back to the phonetic spelling, which is correct, is a question.

Special interest may be found in tracing certain final syllables. For instance, the simple English word *tract*, which means either a wide expanse of space or a long stretch of duration, is a treatise that draws out some train of thought to a definite conclusion. We find that in either sense the word is ultimately from the Latin *traho*, draw. Let us see what we can do with this word. We have a somewhat different derivative from the same source in *traction*, often applied to the drawing of cars over a railway, as in the phrase electric *traction*. This word *tract* is often used as a concluding syllable in combination with various prefixes. In *abstract* the Latin *ab* or *abs*, from, is the prefix, and *abstract* is thus to take from or away. The philosopher *abstracts* one idea from all others, so as to think of that alone, if he can. He may become himself so *abstracted* in the endeavor as to be indifferent to cold or heat or hunger, or to any of his surroundings, as is related of Sir Isaac Newton. While in this condition a thief might *abstract* his purse. In each of these various derived senses the primary

meaning "to take away" controls. But in *attract* we have the Latin *ad*, to (which becomes *at* before the *t* in *tract*), so that to *attract* is to draw to. Thus the sun *attracts* the earth to itself with such force that if the centrifugal motion of our planet were checked by a very little the *attraction* would draw it down upon the globe of fire.

Running down the alphabet a little way we find the prefix *con*, the equivalent of the Latin *cum*, with; and *contract* signifies draw together; the cold draws together the particles of iron or steel, and the rail *contracts*. Persons draw together on the conditions of an agreement, and *contract* to perform it. They enter into a *contract*, a drawing together, coming to an agreement. Again, using the preposition *de*, away from, off from, we have *detract*, draw off from, pick away. The invidious critic does not deny all the excellencies or achievements of his victim. By no means. He simply *detracts*, takes off, picks away a little here and there. The success was not quite so splendid, the motive was not quite so lofty, the character is not quite so high and pure as supposed, and somehow, one scarcely knows how, the luster and glory of a life are dimmed by the *detraction*, the taking away.

Passing to another Latin preposition in *d*, we have *di* or *dis*, apart or aside, and with this we form *distract*, draw apart or aside. To *distract* is to draw in different directions, away from the main purpose. In the crush at the railway station, for in-

stance, pending the departure of a train, one can not think clearly, can not find his ticket or his money, because his thoughts are *distracted*, drawn aside in so many different directions by the crowds, the faces, the noises, and the hurry. His thoughts are scattered and he is *distracted*. One is watching for some signal to be given, or for the hand to reach some precise instant on the dial, but fails to observe it because his attention is just then *distracted*, drawn aside, by some sudden sight or sound from a different direction. Again, in the letter *e* we find a preposition also of Latin origin, *e* or *ex*, meaning out, or out of, and with this we form *extract*, to take out. Thus a tooth is *extracted*, and anyone who has been through the process readily perceives that the expression to abstract the tooth would by no means meet the demands of the occasion. In a somewhat different sense we say, when plants or flowers are crushed and steeped or distilled, that we *extract*, or draw off, their essence or perfume, we form an *extract*. In the court-room it is a triumph when a lawyer by keen cross-questioning *extracts* the truth—draws it forth—from a reluctant witness.

*Pro*—forth or forward—forms *protract*, draw forth, draw forward, or onward. Whoever has sat through an address that seemed to be drawn out, like tape from a conjurer's mouth, with no apparent limit and no assurance that it ever will end, can appreciate the statement that that discourse was *protracted*. We have the Anglo-Saxon translation

in our common speech, "long-drawn-out," which gives exactly the same idea. We find a sharp opposite to the prefix just mentioned in the Latin preposition *re*, back, forming *retract*, draw back, take back. The accuser *retracts* the accusation. We say in the colloquial phrase, "I take it all back," that is, I *retract*. In a different way the claws of the cat are *retractile*, because they can be drawn back at pleasure and sheathed in the velvet paw. We have still another preposition forming one of the *tract* compounds, viz.: *sub*—under—forming *subtract*, take under, and we see its meaning when we do the example and write under the number to be diminished the number that is to be taken away. You *subtract* the less from the greater, you take it from under the greater number.

Thus this single word *tract*, by simple changes of prefixes, gives us a rich variety of meanings. If any one objects that these are all Latin compounds, it is to be answered that one of the crowning excellencies of the English language is that it can thus adopt forms from other tongues and make them thoroughly at home within its own domain, so that these various Latin compounds have come to be English household words.

In a similar way take the syllable *vent*. That has nothing to do with the noun *vent*, as when we speak of the *vent* of a cask or of a gun. It is from the Latin *venio*, come. *Advent* is a coming to; we use it in a great and high sense, as the *advent* of Christ;

the Second Adventists are those who are looking for Christ's second coming, a coming for permanence, a coming to stay. We don't speak of the *advent* of the burglar because he comes without intending to stay, and desires to come as unostentatiously as he possibly can; but we do use *advent* in referring to the coming of some great personage or some great occasion.

We have *convent*, the coming together. That is applied to an assembly of persons who, while they have retired from the world, yet live together in one large building, or series of buildings, as monks or nuns. Now if you trace that word *convent*, you will find that it has a correlative in *monastery*, which is from the Greek *monos*, alone, emphasizing the fact that each one of the recluses lives alone. If you follow that out, you will come to the Greek *eremite*, and from that you get the English *hermit*. *Eremite*, ultimately from *erēmos*, solitary, in the old times was taken over from the Greek into English, and the English transformed it to the Saxon type. They made it *hermit*. As soon as you hear *hermit* you think of the recluse with his long hair and long white beard and his rough dress, living somewhere in a cave. The old picture comes before you. But if you take *eremite*, that seems very artificial, because you get the Greek word scarcely changed, since this was adopted at a later day, when the language had become fixed.

We have *prevent*, to come before. The original

idea is that one does something before another can act, as we say, in colloquial English, "getting ahead of him," that is, to *prevent*. You will find the word used in the Scriptures in the sense of anticipating. As, "when Peter came into the house, Jesus *prevented* him"; that is, Jesus spoke first. We have dropped that meaning and we use the word in the sense of getting in advance of some person or thing so as to keep off some action or result.

A great number of other such forms might be cited, but we must pass on to note a few suffixes. Of these we shall consider chiefly the form *ness*. The ending *ness* is used to form nouns from almost all adjectives, but there is an abuse of it which it is very important to avoid. A noun is often formed in *ness* when there is a perfectly good noun to start with; thus, it is not well to say *accurateness*, when you have the word *accuracy*. It is not well to say *independenceness* when there is the noun *independence*. *Rationality* is better than *rationalness*, and *resolution* is better than *resoluteness*. *Courage* is infinitely better than *courageousness*. *Courageous* is an adjective derived from *courage*, and to get the noun there is no need to put *ness* after that adjective, but simply to take the noun from which the adjective started, and say *courage*. Then, *indifference* should not be supplanted by *indifferentness*; nor *insanity* by *insaneness*; *deliberation* by *deliberateness*; *simplicity* by *simpleness*; *eloquence* by *eloquentness*; *obstinacy* by *obstinateness*. Where there

is a perfectly good noun to express the meaning, *ness* should not be affixed to the adjective. That is always a cheap way of supplying the noun you want, and gives an aspect of cheapness to your style, indicating a lack of reading and of knowledge of the language. There are, however, a few exceptions. Take the word *truthful*, derived from *truth*, and *truthfulness* has a special meaning, which *truth* does not wholly carry. Similarly with *faithful*; *faithfulness* carries a meaning which is not so clearly expressed by *faith*. *Faith* was formerly used in that sense, as: "He kept *faith* with me." To speak of one's faith in that sense is strictly correct; but *faithfulness* as expressing the quality is the better form.

By considering words in this way each word becomes an entity, and language comes to have a perspective.



**IX**

**SPECIMENS OF POWER**



## IX

### SPECIMENS OF POWER

SOMETIMES we appreciate the various elements of literary power most vividly through brief selections, as we see a sudden beauty in the child-angels of the San Sisto Madonna when presented by themselves, separated from the larger work of which they form a part. In the Soldiers' Home Park at Washington the trees at one point have been trimmed in, leaving an opening known as the Capitol Vista; and, as you stand on a knoll and look southward, the vast white building, with its lofty dome, rises from afar on your vision with a beauty such as does not crown it when viewed merely as one feature of the wide landscape. In our reading we do well to cull and con salient passages, those of special strength and beauty, to mark them in our books, to learn them by heart. They become strategic points of interest, and we can recover the connection before and after at will. Let us here present a few—chance specimens gathered here and there, illustrating as by flashes the power and beauty of which our literature is full.

Glance backward across three centuries to the Elizabethan period and note a soldier's portrayal of a peaceful rural scene. Everybody has heard

of Sir Philip Sidney and his *Arcadia*, but how many have ever read a line of it? Study the following extract, and its beauty will grow upon you:

"The third day after, in the time that the morning did strow roses and violets in the heavenly floore against the comming of the sunne, the nightingales (striving one with another which could in most daintie varietie recount their wrong-caused sorrow), made them put off their sleep; and, rising from under a tree, which that night had bin their pavilion, they went on their journey, which by-and-by welcomed Musidorus' eies wearied with the wasted soile of Laconia, with delightfull prospects. There were hills which garnished their proud heights with stately trees; humble vallies whose base estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers; medowes enamelled with all sorts of eye-pleasing flowers; thickets, which, being lined with most pleasant shade, were witnessed so to by the cheerfull disposition of many well-tuned birds; each pasture stored with sheep, feeding with sober securities, while the prettie lambes, with bleating oratorie, craved the dammes comfort; here a shepheard's boy piping as if he should never be old; there a young shephardeesse knitting, and singing withall: and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to worke, and her hands kept time to her voice musick. As for the houses of the countrey, for many houses came under their eye, they were all scattered, no two being one by the other, and yet not so farre off that it barred mutual succor; a show, as it were, of an accompanable solitarinesse, and of a civil wildenesse. . . . .

"But this countrey where you now set your foot is Arcadia. . . . . This countrey being thus decked with peace, and the child of peace, good husbandry, these houses you see so scattered are of men, as we two are, that live upon the commoditie of their sheepe, and therefore, in the division of the Arcadian estate, are termed

shepheards; a happy people wanting [lacking] little, because they desire not much."

—SIDNEY, "*Arcadia.*"

The *Arcadia* was written in 1580 and published in 1590; yet we can read it freely to-day, merely remarking some oddities of spelling, and a certain quaintness of language which only adds to its charm, as in that thoroughly English ideal of country life with homes entirely separate and independent, "no two being one by the other," yet not too far removed, producing the effect of "an accompanable [companionable] solitarinesse [solitude] and of a civil wildenesse [wildness]."

From the same period let us choose a poetic description of a scene of idyllic peace, where the music of the verse even enhances the beauty of the scene which it brings, as in a fair picture, before our very sight:

"A little lowly hermitage it was,  
Down in a dale, hard by a forests side,  
Far from resort of people, that did pass  
In travel to and fro; a little wide  
There was a holy chappel edifie,  
Wherein the Hermit wont to say  
His holy things each morn and even-tide:  
Thereby a chrystal stream did gently play,  
Which from a sacred fountain wellèd forth alway."  
—SPENSER, "*Faerie Queene,*" canto i, st. 34.

That is our own English very slightly changed.  
The Elizabethan era seems not so very far away.

Contrasting with the quiet of the "little lowly

hermitage," consider a passage full of life and action, the opening stanzas of Scott's "Lady of the Lake":

"The stag at eve had drunk his fill,  
Where danced the moon on Monan's rill,  
And deep his midnight lair had made  
In lone Glenartney's hazel shade."

At first, how calm the scene! "The stag had drunk his fill" in the silence, because there came no sight nor sound, no odor on the evening breeze, to alarm his quick, watchful sense. We see the dimly lighted glen and the gentle flow of the stream that made the moon-beams "dance" on the rippling waves.

Then we observe the wary watcher seeking his restful couch "deep in the hazel shade," and the still night glides by.

Sharply comes the transition to earliest dawn. Before the light has flooded the earth, while it is touching only the mountain-tops, the rising sun, hidden by the mountain, sending up its first rays to light, as with a "red beacon," the highest peak, disturbance comes:

"But, when the sun in beacon red  
Had kindled on Benvoirlich's head,  
The deep-mouth'd bloodhound's heavy bay  
Resounded up the rocky way,  
And faint, from farther distance borne,  
Were heard the clanging hoof and horn."

The verse and the very words fit the changing scene. The broad, open vowels—the "*deep-mouth'd blood-*

*hound's*"—"bay"—"*resounded*"—boom with the rude intrusion "up the rocky way."

"As Chief who hears his warder call,  
To arms! the foemen storm the wall,'"

Here the words accelerate:—

"As chief | who hears | his ward- | er call;"

—while the next broken line,

"To arms! | the foe- | men storm | the wall"

rings with the sharp alarm.

"The antler'd monarch of the waste  
Sprung from his heathery couch in haste.  
But, ere his fleet career he took,  
The dew-drops from his flanks he shook;  
Like crested leader proud and high  
Toss'd his beam'd frontlet to the sky;  
A moment gazed adown the dale,  
A moment snuff'd the tainted gale,  
A moment listen'd to the cry  
That thicken'd as the chase drew nigh."

The "crested leader" proves himself "monarch of the waste," calmly pausing to shake "the dew-drops from his flanks" and to take the measure of his foes, as with lifted head he "gazed adown the dale."

"Then, as the headmost foes appear'd,  
With one brave bound the copse he clear'd,  
And, stretching forward free and far,  
Sought the wild heaths of Uam-Var."

There is the sudden bound across the barrier.  
Then the alliterative verse,

"And stretch- | ing, for- | ward free | and far,"  
pictures the swift, sustained run of the hunted stag  
in the pride of his morning strength.

Again a change! The "view" is a special hunting term. It denotes a moment of tremendous excitement. When the game that has been warily tracked appears suddenly in "view"—in plain sight—before the pursuers' eyes, the deep "bay" of the tracing hounds breaks instantly into wild, sharp cries. The verse changes accordingly. The rest comes first,—and a verb of sharp, wild outcry:

*"Yell'd on the view the opening pack;  
Rock, glen, and cavern, paid them back."*

Then a line of hard, jagged sounds,—"rock, glen, paid, back,"—represents the harsh confusion, intensified soon:—

*"To many a mingled sound at once  
The awaken'd mountain gave response.  
A hundred dogs bay'd deep and strong,  
Clatter'd a hundred steeds along,  
Their peal the merry horns rung out,  
A hundred voices join'd the shout;  
With hark and whoop and wild halloo,  
No rest Benvoirlich's echoes knew."*

The varying elements that make up the riot of the hunt in full cry are crowded swiftly together.

*"Far from the tumult fled the roe;  
Close in her covert cower'd the doe."*

The wild creatures of the waste fly or crouch before the dread invasion.

"The falcon, from her cairn or high,  
Cast on the rout a wondering eye,  
Till far beyond her piercing ken,  
*The hurricane had swept the glen.*"

All the human riot is minimized among nature's vast solitudes.

But how tell the story of the receding tumult?  
How restore the scene to nature's calm again?  
Four lines suffice:

*"Faint, and more faint, its failing din  
Returned from cavern, cliff, and linn,  
And silence settled, wide and still,  
On the lone wood and mighty hill."*

The whole scene is presented in forty-six lines! The reader seems to be swept from the peaceful evening through the rushing onset with the hunters, at dawn; then to be made to pause while nature reasserts her reign amid "silence wide and still."

The English language does not lack in picturing power, nor in sudden adaptation to the most varied and contrasted scenes.

Now study Ruskin's sumptuous and splendid description of "Dawn in the Alps." If you have not been among the Alps, you will probably think the picture overdrawn, but, if you have traveled there, you will be aware that all is but the struggling effort of human language to set forth a glory that is beyond expression.

#### DAWN IN THE ALPS

"And then wait yet for one hour, until the East again becomes purple, and the heaving mountains, rolling against

it in darkness like waves of a wild sea, are drowned one by one in the glory of its burnings; watch the white glaciers *blaze* in their winding paths about the mountains, like mighty serpents with scales of fire; watch the columnar peaks of solitary snow kindling downwards, chasm by chasm, each in itself a new morning; their long avalanches cast down in keen streams brighter than the lightning, sending each his tribute of driven snow like *altar-smoke* up to heaven; the rose-light of their silent domes flashing that heaven about them and above them, piercing with purer beams through its purple lines of lifted cloud, casting a new glory on every wreath as it passes by, until the whole heaven—one scarlet canopy—is interwoven with a roof of waving flame and burning vault beyond vault, as with the drifted wings of many companies of angels; and then, when you look no more for gladness, and when you are bowed down with fear and love for the Maker and Doer of all this, tell me who has best delivered his message unto men."

How much of the majesty of nature human words here have told! Contrast with the brightening east the "heaving mountains rolling against it in darkness like waves of a wild sea"; as the mind gives to the giant forms in the changing light the suggestion, not of mere inert masses, but of vast active agencies, that one word "rolling" tells the story—"rolling against it like waves of a wild sea." Mark how "the white glaciers *blaze* in their winding paths about the mountains"; change but the one word "blaze" to "gleam," and see how at once you have dimmed the scene. Note the "*driven* snow,"—perhaps the whitest thing in the visible creation, white with an inner, living light—rising "like *altar-smoke* up to heaven"; change that "*altar-smoke*" to "the

smoke of altars," and observe how you have impeded the expression, how heavy it becomes. Catch the vision of the "purple lines of *lifted cloud*"; you know how the mists of the valleys rise, "lifted" by the beams of the morning sun into low-floating clouds, while the same sun sheds "a new glory on every wreath, as it passes by." Then you begin to perceive how much is in the magic of words, and how rich the language must be that can supply the master with store of words fitted to tell the glory of an Alpine sunrise.

Take now, from Scott's always readable prose, a description of more placid beauty:

#### SUNSET BY THE SEA

"The sun was now resting his huge disk upon the edge of the level ocean, and gilded the accumulation of towering clouds through which he had traveled the livelong day, and which now assembled on all sides, like misfortunes and disasters around a sinking empire and falling monarch. Still, however, his dying splendor gave a somber magnificence to the massive congregation of vapors, forming out of the unsubstantial gloom the show of pyramids and towers, some touched with gold, some with purple, some with a hue of deep and dark red. The distant sea, stretched beneath this varied and gorgeous canopy, lay almost portentously still, reflecting back the dazzling and level beams of the descending luminary, and the splendid coloring of the clouds against which he was setting. Nearer the beach the tide rippled onward in waves of sparkling silver that imperceptibly, yet rapidly, gained upon the sand."

—SCOTT, "*The Antiquary*."

The apparent vastness of sun or moon when near the horizon is told in one short, strong word, "huge"; this meets the optical sense, and you seem to see the descending sun; the word "resting" intensifies the effect, picturing what appears to eye and thought at the first sudden glance. The "towering clouds—assembled," "the massive congregation of vapors," are described in words whose largeness fits the magnitude of the objects; substitute "the tall clouds," and how flat the expression! "the *lofty* clouds" would seem to lift them out of touch with the earth; but that which is "towering" has its foundation on the earth, while its top reaches far aloft; through that single word we see the clouds banked on the horizon and rising far up into the sky. Observe the plaintive touch given by the phrases "sinking empire," "falling monarch," "somber magnificence." Study the phrase "forming out of the *unsubstantial* gloom the show of pyramids and towers," and you see that the word "unsubstantial" is just fitted to its place; it contrasts the light material of the clouds with the solidity of the structures they seemed to represent; at the same time, it is a slow, heavy, and ponderous word, and so exactly fitted to the scene of "gloom" described; leave the adjective out altogether, so that the phrase becomes "forming out of the gloom," and you feel that the description has lost much; try substitution of some other word, as *light*, *slight*, *thin*, *filmy*, *airy*, *aerial*, *ethereal*, *evanescent*, *vaporous*, *vapory*, and you see instantly

that by any one of those the description would be ruined. Passing to the closing sentence, note the rhythmic movement of the words, appealing both to eye and ear: "the tide rippled onward in waves of sparkling silver;" the "imperceptibly" and "rapidly" are longer words, but with liquid vowels, and by their accent fall into the same measure, which is completed in the smooth final phrase "gained upon the sand."

It will not often be possible in our brief space thus to analyze selections, but these notes on the passages thus far cited will indicate how the work may be done, and each reader may follow out the method for himself without any great critical apparatus. Simply try from point to point in any selection that interests you to substitute other words; see if they produce the same effect, and, if not, wherein they fail. Sometimes get the thought of the passage into your mind, and then rewrite as best you can without looking at the book. Unless you have memorized the words, you will be sure to find that you have made many changes. Wherever your expression is inferior to your author's, study to know the reason why; and as you find out why your words are less desirable, you will by that very act perceive why his are more effective. Skill in such judgment will grow upon you, will increase your enjoyment of reading, and will react upon your own spoken or written style.

Pass now from sunset to night, and from prose to poetry:

## A WINTER NIGHT

How beautiful this night! The balmiest sigh  
 Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear  
 Were discord to the speaking quietude  
 That wraps the moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault,  
 Studded with stars unutterably bright,  
 Seems like a canopy which love has spread  
 Above the sleeping world. Yon gentle hills  
 Robed in a garment of untrodden snow;  
 Yon darksome rocks whence icicles depend,  
 So stainless that their white and glittering spires  
 Tinge not the moon's pure beam; yon castled steep,  
 Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower  
 So idly that rapt fancy deemeth it  
 A metaphor of peace;—all form a scene  
 Where musing solitude might love to lift  
 Her soul above this sphere of earthliness;  
 Where silence undisturbed might watch alone,  
 So cold, so bright, so still!

—SHELLEY, "*Queen Mab*," pt. iv.

That can be read again, and again, and at every reading its beauty grows upon you. The study walls seem silently to move away, and we are out under the open sky in the still, perfect night.

Change the scene again, combine night with storm, and observe how the language responds to the sterner harmonies of nature:

## AN ALPINE THUNDER-STORM

"The sky is changed!—and such a change! O night  
 And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,  
 Yet lovely in your strength. . . . .

Far along,  
 From peak to peak, the rattling crags among  
 Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,

But every mountain now hath found a tongue,  
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,  
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!"  
—BYRON, "*Childe Harold*," can. iii, st. 92.

Observe the power of that succession of simple words, "night and storm and darkness." They alone set forth the scene, needing no adjective, and almost telling the story without a verb. The "far along" pictures the swift, long line of the lightning flash. The shivering effect of the thunder-burst is heard in the phrase, "the rattling crags." The clouds have become the "misty shroud" of the mighty Jura range, yet through the veil she answers "the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud." It needed but a poet to see and hear, and the power of the language was ready with instant response to bring to the soul of every one who can but read the sight and sound of the mighty movement of nature.

Turning again to prose, note with what thrilling realism one of England's great novelists has described an ocean scene on England's storm-beaten shore:

"When we came in sight of the sea, the waves on the horizon, caught at intervals above the rolling abyss, were like glimpses of another shore with towers and buildings. . . .

"The tremendous sea itself, when I could find sufficient pause to look at it, in the agitation of the blinding wind, the flying stones and sand, and the awful noise, confounded me. As the high watery walls came rolling in, and at their highest tumbled into surf, they looked as if

the least would engulf the town. As the receding wave swept back with a hoarse roar, it seemed to scoop out deep caves in the beach, as if its purpose were to undermine the earth. When some white-headed billows thundered on, and dashed themselves to pieces before they reached the land, every fragment of the late whole seemed possessed by the full might of its wrath, rushing to be gathered to the company of another monster. Undulating hills were changed to valleys; undulating valleys (sometimes with a solitary storm-bird skimming through them) were lifted up to hills; masses of water shivered and shook the beach with a booming sound; every shape tumultuously rolled on, as soon as made, to change its shape and place, and beat another shape and place away; the ideal shore on the horizon, with its towers and buildings, rose and fell; the clouds flew fast and thick; I seemed to see a rending and upheaval of all nature."

—DICKENS, "*David Copperfield*," ch. 55.

Would you have a battle-song? Take Campbell's historic lay:

#### YE MARINERS OF ENGLAND

"Ye mariners of England!  
That guard our native seas;  
Whose flag has braved a thousand years,  
The battle and the breeze!  
Your glorious standard launch again  
To match another foe!  
And sweep through the deep,  
While the stormy winds do blow:  
While the battle rages loud and long,  
And the stormy winds do blow.

• • • • •

Britannia needs no bulwarks,  
No towers along the steep;  
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,  
Her home is on the deep.

With thunders from her native oak,  
She quells the floods below—  
As they roar on the shore,  
When the stormy winds do blow;  
When the battle rages loud and long,  
And the stormy winds do blow.

The meteor flag of England  
Shall yet terrific burn;  
Till danger's troubled night depart,  
And the star of peace return.  
Then, then, ye ocean warriors!  
Our song and feast shall flow  
To the fame of your name,  
When the storm has ceased to blow;  
When the fiery fight is heard no more,  
And the storm has ceased to blow."

The very swell of ocean and sweep of wind are in the lines. American hearts answer to their music, for we, too, love the ocean; and, though in defense of other seas and other shores, we, too, know how to "brave the battle and the breeze."

Now read two stanzas bringing the splendid movement and excitement of battle into touching contrast with nature's quiet beauty:

#### WATERLOO

"And there was mounting in hot haste: the steed,  
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,  
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,  
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war;  
And the deep thunder peal on peal afar;  
And near, the beat of the alarming drum  
Roused up the soldier ere the morning star;  
While throng'd the citizens with terror dumb,

Or whispering, with white lips—"The foe! They come!  
they come!"

• • • • •

"And Ardennes waves above them her green leaves,  
Dewy with Nature's tear-drops, as they pass,  
Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,  
Over the unreturning brave,—alas!  
Ere evening to be trodden like the grass  
Which now beneath them, but above shall grow  
In its next verdure, when this fiery mass  
Of living valor, rolling on the foe,  
And burning with high hope, shall moulder cold and low."

—BYRON, "*Childe Harold*," canto iii, st. 25, 27.

Taking these two stanzas by themselves, one can scarcely read them without tears. How the splendor of the charge melts into the moan for the slaughter of heroes:—"the unreturning brave!" Is there lack of martial energy, stir and fire, or of tender pathos in English speech?

Now read two sonnets of Milton, of which most persons know only one or two ever-quoted lines. To gain the realistic touch—to see what the privation meant to living man in daily life—and to feel the sustained sublimity of high motive pervading that life, one needs to read all the words as written out of that grand mind and heart.

#### To CYRIACK SKINNER—1655

"Cyriack, this three years' day these eyes, though clear,  
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,  
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot;  
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear  
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,  
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not

Against Heav'n's hand or will, nor bate a jot  
 Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer  
 Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?  
 The conscience, Friend, t' have lost them overplied  
 In liberty's defence, my noble task,  
 Of which all Europe talks from side to side.  
 This thought might lead me thro' the world's vain mask  
 Content, though blind, had I no better guide."

## ON HIS BLINDNESS—1655

"When I consider how my light is spent  
 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,  
 And that one talent which is death to hide,  
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
 My true account, lest he returning chide;  
 'Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?'  
 I fondly\* ask: But Patience, to prevent  
 That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need  
 Either man's work or his own gifts; who best  
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state  
 Is kingly; Thousands at his bidding speed,  
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest;  
 They also serve who only stand and wait.'"

See how Dryden summarizes in four lines the conquering career of the great Protector, Cromwell:

"Swift and restless through the land he passed,  
 Like that bold Greek who did the East subdue,  
 And made to battles such heroic haste,  
 As if on wings of victory he flew."

## TO A WATERFOWL

"Whither, midst falling dew,  
 While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,  
 Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue  
 Thy solitary way?

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\* In the old sense of "weakly" or "foolishly."

Vainly the fowler's eye  
 Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,  
 As, darkly limned upon the crimson sky,  
 Thy figure floats along.

. . . . .  
 There is a Power whose care  
 Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,—  
 The desert and illimitable air,—  
 Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,  
 At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,  
 Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land  
 Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;  
 Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,  
 And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,  
 Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven  
 Hath swallowed up thy form; yet on my heart  
 Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,  
 And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,  
 Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,  
 In the long way that I must tread alone  
 Will lead my steps aright."

—WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

Pope's translation of the Iliad has won enduring fame. This is not because of the accuracy of the translation. The eminent critic Richard Bentley said of it: "It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer." Nevertheless, Pope has caught the movement and action of the Homeric poem, and rendered it into almost faultless, and often thrilling, English verse. The poem as it stands

is infinitely superior to the same poet's trashy and petty "Rape of the Lock," and has brought a multitude of readers as near as they could ever come to knowing Homer. Specimens of beautiful English verse may be found by opening the book almost anywhere. See with what impressiveness the march of the princely envoys of Agamemnon to Achilles is told in a single couplet:

"Through the still night they walked and heard the roar  
Of murmuring billows on the sounding shore."

From the overwhelming abundance of oratorical material, let us choose but three brief paragraphs:

#### JUSTICE TO AMERICA

"I contend not for indulgence, but for justice, to America. . . . The spirit that now resists your taxation in America is the same which formerly opposed loans, benevolences, and ship-money in England;—the same spirit which called all England on its legs, and by the Bill of Rights vindicated the English Constitution; the same spirit which established the great fundamental, essential maxim of your liberties, that no subject of England shall be taxed but by his own consent. This glorious Whig spirit animates three millions in America, who prefer poverty with liberty to gilded chains and sordid affluence; and who will die in defence of their rights as men, as freemen. What shall oppose this spirit, aided by the congenial flame glowing in the breast of every Whig in England? 'Tis liberty to liberty engaged,' that they will defend themselves, their families, and their country. In this great cause they are immovably allied; it is the alliance of God and nature—immutable, eternal,—fixed as the firmament of heaven. . . . This wise people speak out. They do not hold the language of slaves. They do

not ask you to repeal your laws as a favor. They claim it as a right—they demand it. And I tell you the acts must be repealed. We shall be forced ultimately to retract. Let us retract while we can, not when we must. I say we must necessarily undo these violent, oppressive acts. They *must* be repealed. You *will* repeal them. I pledge myself for it that you will, in the end, repeal them.\* I stake my reputation on it. I will consent to be taken for an idiot, if they are not finally repealed. Avoid, then, this humiliating, this disgraceful necessity. Every motive of justice and of policy, of dignity and of prudence, urges you to allay the ferment in America by a removal of your troops from Boston, by a repeal of your acts of Parliament."

—WILLIAM PITT, Earl of Chatham, in the House of Lords, Jan. 20, 1775.

### PERSONALITY *vs.* PATRIOTISM

"It is the greatest courage to be able to bear the imputation of the want of courage. But pride, vanity, egotism, so unamiable and offensive in private life, are vices which partake of the character of crimes in the conduct of public affairs. The unfortunate victim of these passions can not see beyond the little, petty, contemptible circle of his own personal interests. All his thoughts are withdrawn from his country, and concentrated on his consistency, his firmness, himself. The high, the exalted, the sublime emotions of a patriotism which, soaring toward heaven, rises far above all mean, low, or selfish things, and is absorbed by one soul-transporting thought of the good or glory of one's country, are never felt in his impenetrable bosom. That patriotism which, catching its inspiration from the immortal God, and, leaving at an immeasurable distance below all lesser, groveling, personal interests and feelings, animates and prompts to deeds of self-sacrifice, of valor, of devotion, and of death it-

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\* This prediction was fulfilled by the repeal of the acts three years later; when, however, it had become too late.

self,—that is public virtue; that is the noblest, the sublimest of all public virtues."

—HENRY CLAY (1841).

### THE PLATFORM OF THE CONSTITUTION

"Finally, the honorable member declares that he shall now march off, under the banner of State rights. . . .

Let him go. I remain. I am where I ever have been, and ever mean to be. Here, standing on the platform of the general Constitution,—a platform broad enough and firm enough to uphold every interest of the whole country,—I shall still be found. Intrusted with some part in the administration of that Constitution, I intend to act in its spirit and in the spirit of those who framed it. . . .

Standing thus, as in the full gaze of our ancestors and our posterity, having received this inheritance from the former to be transmitted to the latter, and feeling that if I am born for any good in my day and generation, it is for the good of the whole country,—no local policy, no local feeling, no temporary impulse, shall induce me to yield my foothold on the Constitution and the Union. I move off under no banner not known to the whole American people, and to their Constitution and laws. No, Sir! these walls, these columns

'fly

From their firm base as soon as I'

I came into public life, Sir, in the service of the United States. On that broad altar my earliest and all my public vows have been made. I propose to serve no other master. So far as depends on any agency of mine, they shall continue, *United States*;—united in interest and in affection; united in everything in regard to which the Constitution has decreed their union; united in war, for the common defense, the common renown, and the common glory; and united, compacted, knit firmly together in peace for the common prosperity and happiness of ourselves and our children."

—DANIEL WEBSTER (1838).

Before leaving the subject, we must not fail to remark the majestic sweep of the Jacobean English in the Authorized Version of the Scriptures:

"The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers; Bashan languisheth and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."

—*Nahum i, 3-7.*

Nor may we overlook the grand Christian lyrics, the "Hymns of the Ages." It is true that many devout souls have expressed the heart's devotion in feeble verse, whence many persons have a vague idea that all religious song is marked by literary inferiority. Take for a single example to the contrary this triumphant hymn of Dean Henry Alford, learned as he was devout:

"Ten thousand times ten thousand,  
In sparkling raiment bright,  
The armies of the ransom'd saints  
Throng up the steeps of light:  
'Tis finished! all is finished,  
Their fight with death and sin:  
Fling open wide the golden gates,  
And let the victors in.

What rush of hallelujahs  
    Fills all the earth and sky!  
What ringing of a thousand harps  
    Bespeaks the triumph nigh!  
O day for which creation  
    And all its tribes were made!  
O joy, for all its former woes  
    A thousandfold repaid.

Oh, then what raptur'd greetings  
    On Canaan's happy shore!  
What knitting severed friendships up,  
    Where partings are no more!"

There is true poetry in such hymns as Faber's "There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea"; in Newman's "Lead, kindly light"; in Addison's "The spacious firmament on high," and in many another. The great chants and anthems of the church lay a solemn, reverent hush upon the soul. The world will never forget the hymn of the heroic band while the *Titanic* was sinking, "Nearer, My God, to Thee!" Many of our simplest English hymns have been found so expressive that they have followed the path of English and American missions all around the globe, and been translated into all the languages of the earth. Creeds, indeed, change; theological conceptions change; but it is narrow and petty to reject because of some theological disagreement the aspiring trust and longing expressed in the hymn of a soul that mightily believed. We need only to be big enough to draw into our own souls the faith, devo-

tion, love, patience, rapture, triumph, that breathe in the noblest and sweetest Christian lyrics of the ages.

It will be observed that this little collection of "specimens" has omitted most of the masterpieces of English expression, and purposely, because those have been read and recited so often that the mind of the average reader flinches away from them. We often envy the boys and girls to whom these are to come with the surprize of novelty, and wish we could go back to read the choicest selections of our literature for the first time. The nearest approach to such delight is by reversing the method followed in this chapter.

Get these gems in their setting. Read the works containing them, until through their context they flash upon you, no longer as "familiar quotations," but as integral parts of what is great or beautiful, even without them. If you are tired of the very mention of "The quality of mercy is not strained," read the "Merchant of Venice," till you come upon the tender plea at the crucial moment of the trial for Antonio's life, and it will be new and moving to your heart, almost as if never read before. So Milton's lines, beginning, "Now came still evening on and twilight gray—" have a new beauty amid the description of Paradise.

In every garden there will be one flower the most exquisite. But it is ill to be oblivious of the garden. So you may pass unnoticed

"A violet by a mossy stone  
    Half hidden from the eye,  
Fair as a star when only one  
    Is shining in the sky."

Often you find that the perfect rose, when cut, has lost something. The eye is no longer led up to it by gradations and associations of kindred or contrasted beauty. "Literary selections" have valuable use as suggestive, refining, inspiring; but their fullest and best use is when they lead us to the sources from which they are taken, to read at first hand the masterpieces of literature.



**X**

**ENGLISH A WORLD-LANGUAGE**



## X

### ENGLISH A WORLD-LANGUAGE

It is possible to travel twice round the world on different lines of progress, and wherever we set foot we shall be standing in countries where English is the dominant language. Thus we may sail from Liverpool to Queenstown, thence across the Atlantic to Newfoundland, up the St. Lawrence between British shores to Montreal and Quebec; then journey by land over the vast Dominion of Canada to the Pacific, across that ocean to the British Crown Colony of Hongkong, with its population of 561,000; skirt the wide shores of Burmah and British India, where great cities, like Calcutta, with its population of a million and a half, and Madras, with half a million, are predominantly English in speech; pass through the Straits Settlements, touching at the British city of Singapore, land at Aden, sail up the Red Sea, and through the Suez Canal, touching at Suez and Port Said and Alexandria, and making a detour to Cairo; thence onward to the island of Cyprus, the island of Malta, anchor under the British fortress of Gibraltar, where the "Pillars of Hercules" fixed the western limit of the ancient world, thence sail back to our starting point, and not have been one moment outside the sweep of

British dominion nor away from the hearing of English speech.

Once again we may set out from England, touch at the Bermudas, the Bahamas, Jamaica, and other West Indian islands, at British Honduras, British Guiana, coast along South America, visiting the Falkland Islands under the British flag, then on into the Pacific to British North Borneo and New Zealand, and the continental island of Australia; touch at British East Africa; thence shape our course for Cape Town, where Britain holds the whole southern extremity of Africa; then northwesterly to the chain of colonies and protectorates of British West Africa with a total territory of 447,500 square miles; then northward, touching at the Channel Islands; and so to England again;—and all the lands visited in this second journey are under British dominion, with English everywhere the dominant speech. Draw the two routes on the world-map and the lines will nowhere intersect. But if we were then to trace the scattered islands under British control in all parts of the globe—Ascension Island, St. Helena, Mauritius, Christmas Island, the Cocos, Cook, and Fiji islands, and many another—the lines connecting these points and groups would quickly interlace, throwing a tangled spider's web across the seas.

Yet this survey has touched but the outer rim of British territory, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland reaching through its outlying islands far toward the Arctic Circle; British India,

stretching over forty degrees of latitude and well nigh thirty of longitude; Australia, a continent with more than three million square miles; Alexandria and Cape Town, the gateways to a succession of British colonies and protectorates extending almost without a break from the Mediterranean to the South Atlantic, so that at some time the dream of a "Cape to Cairo railroad," under British control, may be made a reality. We recall the ringing tribute of Daniel Webster to British genius for expansion:

"A power which has dotted over the surface of the whole globe with her possessions and military posts, whose morning drumbeat, following the sun and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England."

All these various territories interact and interlock, so that no traveler can pass around the earth in any direction without touching at British ports and sailing through straits commanded by British guns; and at every one of these ports his readiest official and business communication will be in the English language.

And yet the story is not told. We may leave the protection of the British flag, and under the Stars and Stripes traverse the continent-wide United States, three thousand miles from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, sail past the Pacific shore of the Dominion of Canada, follow the southern coast of Alaska and the chain of one hundred and fifty

Aleutian islands reaching westward almost to the shore of Asia; thence a southwesterly course will bring us to the Philippines, touching on the way at the United States naval station of Guam; then southward, crossing the equator, to Tutuila and the Samoan Islands; then almost due north to the Hawaiian Islands, frontier outposts of the republic; then southeastwardly to Panama, crossing the Canal Zone under the American flag; then northeastwardly to the United States island of Porto Rico; thence to Florida and up the Atlantic coast of the continental United States to the Canadian boundary on the eastern shore, and we have traversed 180 degrees of longitude;—we have gone half round the earth again, all under the flag of the United States, and everywhere with free communication in English speech.

On a map or globe where national territory is shown each in distinctive color, it is fairly startling to see how nearly the British dominion is omnipresent on the earth. If we could have a map colored according to the dominion of the English speech, that language would seem to be well on the way to territorial possession of the world.

British territory aggregates 12,780,380 square miles,\* with a population of 441,440,000; United States territory aggregates 3,574,658 square miles, with a population of 105,000,000. Adding these items, we find that the English-speaking peoples

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\* Statistics from the "Statesman's Year Book" of 1919.

dominate 16,335,038 square miles, inhabited by a population of 546,410,000. The entire land surface of the earth is credibly estimated at 55,699,315 square miles and the population at something over 1,500,000,000. Thus, more than one-fourth of the land surface of the globe and more than one-third of its population are under the dominion of the English-speaking peoples. The number of people speaking English as their vernacular has been credibly estimated at 160,000,000. Never before in the whole march of time did any one language have such wide ascendancy over the inhabited earth.

Analysis only deepens the wonder. The countries where English is the vernacular—the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the Dominion of Canada, and the United States of America—are world-moving and world-molding powers.

The largest cities of the earth are London, England, with a total population of 7,251,358,\* and New York in the United States with a population of 5,620,048. The largest non-English cities to be brought into comparison with these are Berlin (2,071,257), Paris (2,888,110), Tokio (2,244,796), and Petrograd (2,318,645), each falling some 3,000,000 short of either great English-speaking metropolis. The American city of Chicago stands in a separate class, with a population of 2,701,705. Thus of seven cities of the two-million class, three

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\* These figures are for what is known as "Greater London"; Registration London" contains 4,521,685.

are in English-speaking countries; and these three have an aggregate population of 15,573,111, while the aggregate population of the other four is but 9,522,808. Of 180 cities listed at 200,000 to 2,000,-000, forty-eight, or more than one-fourth of the whole number, are in the homelands of English. This statement takes no account of cities or ports in outlying British or American possessions, as Calcutta, Madras, Hongkong, Singapore, or Manila; but includes only those in lands where the English language is the vernacular. These English-speaking cities are at the very front in commerce, manufactures, energy and enterprise, humming with industry, abounding in wealth, prime factors of the world's creative force.

Then, far beyond the territory actually controlled by the English-speaking nations, is to be traced the projection or interpenetration of the English language among nations politically independent of British or American authority. English, as the language of commercial conquest, is easily at the front. The steady and vigorous push of British commercial activity has long been felt in every land. American industrial achievements have been so often told that we are dizzy with the recital, and no recital can keep up with the facts.

English and American tourists have been a great factor in the spread of the language. Their scale of expenditure is more liberal than that of the travelers of most other nations. The courier or dragoman

desiring the most remunerative service has found it necessary to be able to speak English. Before the outbreak of the World War, English-speaking attendants, guides and interpreters would meet the traveler in every large city, not only of continental Europe, but of Egypt and the Orient. English-speaking guides at Luxor and Thebes and under the shadow of the Pyramids would relate to troops of tourists the wonders of ancient art and the greater wonders of modern fabrication. When we consider that, in 1908, cabin passengers to the number of 236,781 sailed for foreign countries from the ports of the United States alone, we can see how mighty a force this has been, sweeping in continental waves around the world.

The reflex of American immigration is also an important agency in the spread of the English speech. In the years from 1909 to 1913 the immigrants returning from the United States to Europe averaged some 300,000 annually. In years of financial depression the number has often been much greater. These returned immigrants are found in every land. When the balloon of an American named Mix came down in a Russian forest, one of the first peasants who ran up to hold the ropes was a Russian who had been in America and was able to talk in English with the stranger who had unexpectedly dropped from the sky.

These thousands are not mere travelers returning. They are full of tales about the power and

opportunity of the great industrial republic. The vision of America is spreading far and wide among the distant peoples. The language of America is the language of hope.

The qualities of the language and of the civilization it represents also aid its diffusion. The simplicity of its structure makes it easy for the uncultured foreigner to acquire it, while to the scholarly foreigner English comes with the momentum of five centuries of thought embodied in a noble, beautiful and impressive literature. No scholar of any race considers himself highly educated unless, for instance, he can read in the original the plays of Shakespeare.

All this leads on to a higher thought of the mission of the English speech. It is a belittling view of language that regards it merely as a means of communication. Language is the expression of a people's life, brimming with the achievements of all its past, and reaching on with shaping and molding power to the generations yet to be. Language molds the thought of those who speak it, exalting or degrading. This molding power of our language is a mighty force in shaping the mingled peoples into one on American soil. A multitude of noble conceptions, hammered out in argument, won by conquest on the foughten field or reached in exultant flights of poetic rapture, have crystallized into our forms of speech, so that for all who speak and study the language these become forms of thought.

This wide diffusion of the English language has had a tendency to correct the narrowness and exclusiveness that come of too intensive culture. It is ill for a people to be too self-restricted; so they lose world-consciousness, and are at some time amazed, angered or dismayed to find how the wide world views opinions and conduct which the one circumscribed nation had proved to itself and approved by and for itself. But the English-speaking man may feel at comparative ease in almost any part of the habitable globe. The English language has become greater and richer by its widely extended range, as it has expanded to meet vaster needs, interests, and opportunities. The Englishman is less able, by reason of his language, to think only in terms of England, of London, of the Thames, the Mersey or the Tweed, and the American less able to think only in terms of his own cities, mountains, lakes, and rivers. Most wholesome is the broadening of thought, feeling and sympathy produced by the wider outlook, tending to a larger and a loftier humanity.

Far beyond the reach of the English language as the medium of trade and commerce, a competent knowledge of English has come to be a necessity of high scholarship in every nation to-day. Of the appreciation of the literature of England by a foreigner there is no finer example than in the admirable volumes of Jusserand's "Literary History of the English People," in which, with the keen

insight and the power of vivid expression characteristic of his own people, he has described with such loving admiration the work of England's masters of literary art as to make his record of every period a story of fascinating interest.

This world-wide prevalence of the English language naturally tends to a world-wide unity of those by whom it is spoken. It does not, indeed, of itself insure such unity. The Greek states, using a single language and all reading the same literature, were practically always at war with one another. The entire soil of England has been fought over again and again by men of the same blood and language arrayed in arms against each other. The most terrible war the United States has known was that between the Northern and Southern States, whose language was one. Still, every traveler knows how, in a foreign land, his heart warms to one who speaks his own language. The tie is real, altho not always strong enough to resist opposing influences.

So far the British Empire as a whole has proved itself a unity. After the great error which the American Revolution rebuked, England abandoned the Roman and Spanish system of coercion and exploitation of provinces, and gave to her distant colonies virtual autonomy. The Roman colonies and provinces went down before the barbarians as soon as the wall of the Roman legions was broken. Spain once had an empire on which, in very fact, "the sun never set"; but it was an empire of subject-

provinces each held in the strangle-hold of military domination, to be exploited by successive officials whose one aim was to return with sudden riches to Spain. Hence the moment Spain's military power was weakened these dependencies in swift succession threw off their allegiance.

But Great Britain for more than a century has in the main pursued the policy of developing and stimulating the energies of the subject peoples by free activity, bringing out the resources of all, and teaching the people how to defend themselves in modern war by military training of native troops. Many of the British dependencies—Canada, Australasia, and South Africa—are strong enough to throw off, if they pleased, their allegiance to Great Britain. Yet nothing has been more remarkable in the great World War than the way in which these far-separated dependencies rushed to the aid of the Empire. Soldiers from Canada, from New Zealand, from Australia and from South Africa, though not compelled by conscription, thronged as volunteers to the imperial standard on every battle-field. There is all this evidence of an internal unity of spirit and character such as despotic organization and military compulsion could never secure, and which is of the happiest augury for the continued ascendancy of the English language in the future development of the race.





